

JOSHUA

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1. INTRODUCTION

- a. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. (Joshua 1:1-3)
- b. Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. (Joshua 21:43-45)
- c. For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (Hebrews 4:8-10)
- d. The Book of Joshua Assures God's People that All of God's Promises Will Come to Pass, Encourages Them to Faithful Living, And Foreshadows the True Rest & Inheritance Won by Jesus Christ.

2. APPROACHING JOSHUA

- a. "The nature of the material under investigation determines the rules by which you interpret it."
- b. Joshua is a book.
- c. Joshua has an author.
 - i. Our task is to answer the question, "Why did the author write this?"

- ii. We have understood Joshua when we have discerned what the author intended to communicate and accomplish.
 - iii. Joshua has both a human and a divine author who never contradict one another.
 - iv. The human author of Joshua relied on a variety of material.
 - v. Since Joshua is composed of language, it must follow the rules of the language in which it is written.
 - vi. Readers are not free to do or say whatever he or she pleases about the meaning of a text.
- d. Joshua is not merely a record of God's self-revelation in history, Joshua is itself God's self-revelation.
- i. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

3. CRITICAL ISSUES

a. Author

i. Internal Evidence

- 1. Joshua is technically anonymous.
- 2. Joshua may have had a final redactor as suggested by the recurring phrase, "to this day." (4:9; 5:9; 7:26; etc.) Some have suggested Samuel, or perhaps Ezra, as the final editor.

ii. External Evidence

- 1. "Joshua wrote the book which bears his own name." (Baba Bathra, 15a, Babylonian Talmud)

b. Date

i. Dating the Events Recorded in Joshua

- 1. The events of Joshua occur roughly 40 years after the Exodus which occurred in/around 1446 BC. This dates the events of Joshua to c. 1400 BC. (1 Kings 6:1; Judges 11:26; 1 Chronicles 6:33-37)

ii. Composition Date:

- 1. Scholars are extremely divided on the composition date of Joshua. R. K. Harrison suggests Joshua was completed by the beginning of the Israelite monarchy c. 1051 B.C. while others propose that the book could have been completed

during the time of the Judges or even as late as the time of the post-exilic Ezra.

2. The optimistic tone of the book suggests an earlier, rather than later date of composition.

iii. Biblical Timeline:

1. 2140 BC: God Calls Abraham
2. 2066 – 1886 BC: Isaac
3. 2006 – 1859 BC: Jacob
4. 1914 – 1805 BC: Joseph
5. 1730 – 1445 BC: Israel's Slavery in Egypt
6. 1446 BC: Exodus
7. 1406 – 1405 BC: Israel Crosses the Jordan into Canaan
8. 1390 BC: Joshua Dies
9. 1105 – 1013 BC: Life of Samuel
10. 1051-1011 BC: Reign of Saul in Israel
11. 1011-971 BC: Reign of David in Israel
12. C. 950 – 6th/7th century BC: Israel Divides into Two Kingdoms (Israel/Judah are Given to Idolatry)
13. 722 – 605 BC: Israel Falls to Assyria, Exiled
14. 605 – 539 BC: Assyria Falls to Babylon, Judah Exiled to Babylon
15. 536 BC: Proclamation of Cyrus, Jews Return to Jerusalem
16. 515 BC: Ezra Leads Exiles to Jerusalem

c. Occasion

- i. The occasion of Joshua would greatly depend on the interpreter's understanding of Joshua's dating. Because I take an earlier date for Joshua's composition, I believe the book to be a theological memorialization of Israel receiving the covenant promises God had made during the ministry of Moses. As such, the book explains the "here and now" of Israel's existence in the promised land even as it points us forward to the promise of a new heaven and earth given through the better New Covenant.

d. Purpose & Themes:

- i. "it appears that the purpose of the book of Joshua was to recount, from a theological perspective, the events surrounding Israel's capture and settlement of the land of Canaan—with particular emphasis on God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (ESV Study Bible)
- ii. Faithfulness & Obedience

1. Obedience to the Law (1:7-8)
2. Careful Adherence to Military Strategy (6:1-5)
3. Joshua Left Nothing Undone (11:15)
4. Allocation of Tribal Inheritances (13:1-7)
5. Joshua's Final Charge (23:1-16) and Covenant Renewal (24:1-128)

iii. Identity of the People of God

1. Although, at one level, it is true that God was giving the land to "Israel," it's also true that several Canaanites are welcomed into God's people (Joshua 2) and several Israelites are cut off (Joshua 7).
2. In other words, God's people are those who trust and obey God and serve his purposes in the world. Those who reject God and his Word are not his people regardless of their ethnic identity.

iv. The Servant of the Lord

1. No doubt, Joshua is the central human figure of the book. Joshua had served as a faithful spy in the Pentateuch, assuring the children of Israel that the Lord would give the Canaanites into their hands. Now, as the newly ordained leader who succeeds Moses, Joshua brings Israel into the promised land through obedience to the Lord and is presented as the "servant of the Lord." (Joshua 24:29)
2. The same title is used repeatedly of Moses in the book of Joshua. (1:1, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6 (×2); 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4, 5)
3. The same title is used of David as he desires to build a temple for the Lord (2 Sam. 7:5)
4. The "servant" motif takes on special importance in Isaiah as it references the coming Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of his people. (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-10; and 52:13-53:12)
5. Joshua, as the Lord's servant, foreshadows the full inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5) and rest (Hebrews 3:11, 18; 4:1-11) found only in the true and better servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

v. Land & Rest

1. Geography plays a major role in the narrative of Joshua. God promised land to Abraham, which he is now giving to Abraham's offspring. (Gen. 12:7)

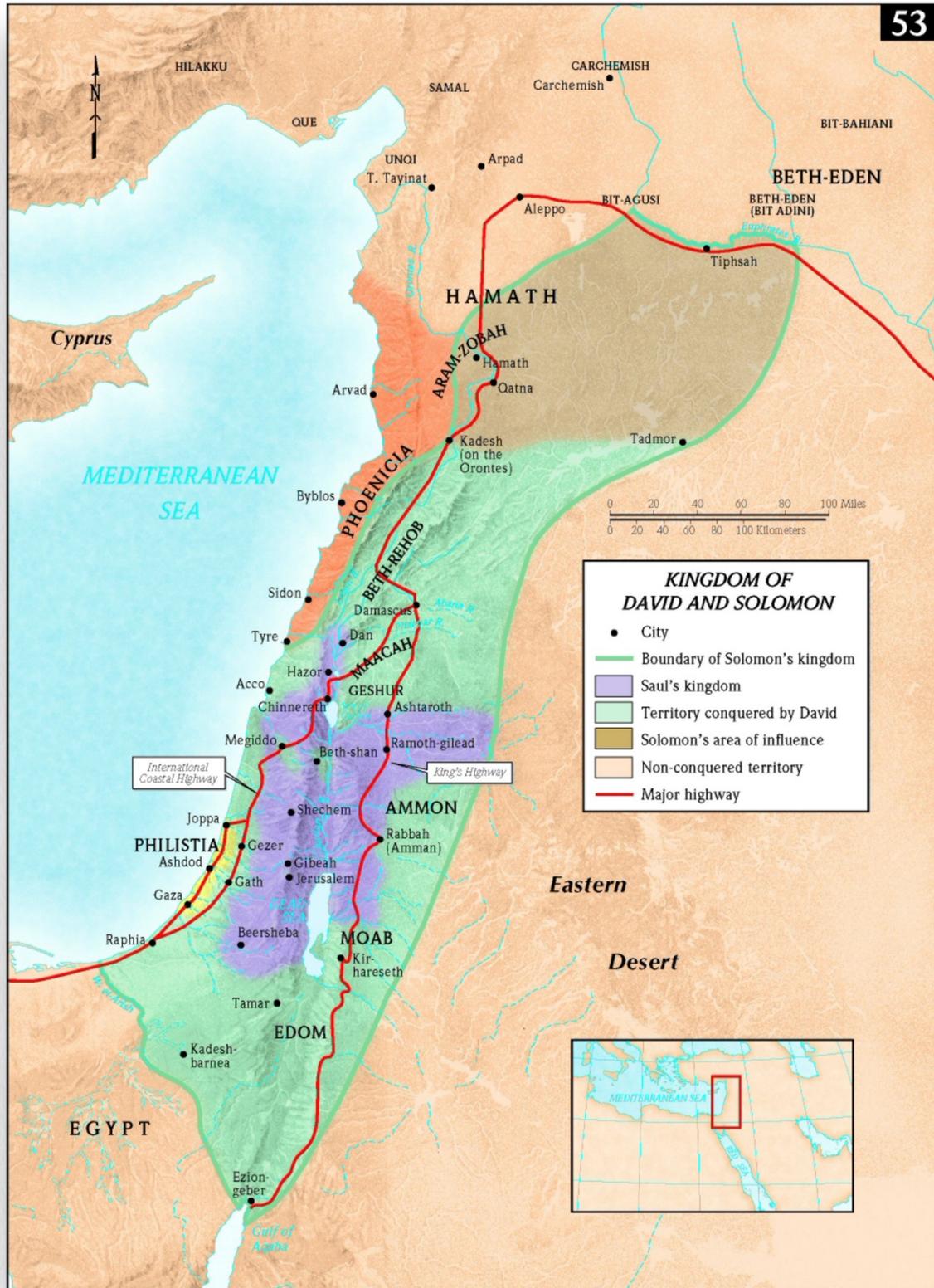
2. Israel would possess the land, and thereby rest, through covenant faithfulness and obedience and could forfeit the land through disobedience and idolatry. (Joshua 24:14-28; Deut. 30:1)
3. As mentioned before, the inheritance of land and rest promised through the Mosaic Covenant and delivered by Joshua is superseded by a greater inheritance and rest promised through the New Covenant and secured by Jesus Christ. Instead of a small plot of land in the Middle East, the church inherits the earth (Matt. 5:5) and unlike the promises received in Joshua's day, the inheritance and rest promised to the church cannot be forfeited because they become ours based on the perfect and unfailing record of Christ.

e. Genre

- i. In the Hebrew canon, the book of Joshua begins the second division of the Old Testament known as "The Prophets." Joshua, along with the other "Former Prophets" (Joshua-2 Kings minus Ruth) present a theological history of God's dealings with Israel.
- ii. The book of Joshua qualifies as historiography (history writing), but it is not like the ostensibly disinterested, largely political histories that modern secular historians write. It is, rather, a didactic history written from a prophetic (that is, theological) point of view. (ESV Study Bible)
- iii. The 'prophecy of Joshua' means to convict, not merely to inform; to comfort, not simply to enlighten. The Book of Joshua is preaching material beamed to Israel in the form of historical narrative. (No Falling Words, Davis)

f. Setting of Joshua

i. Land God Promised



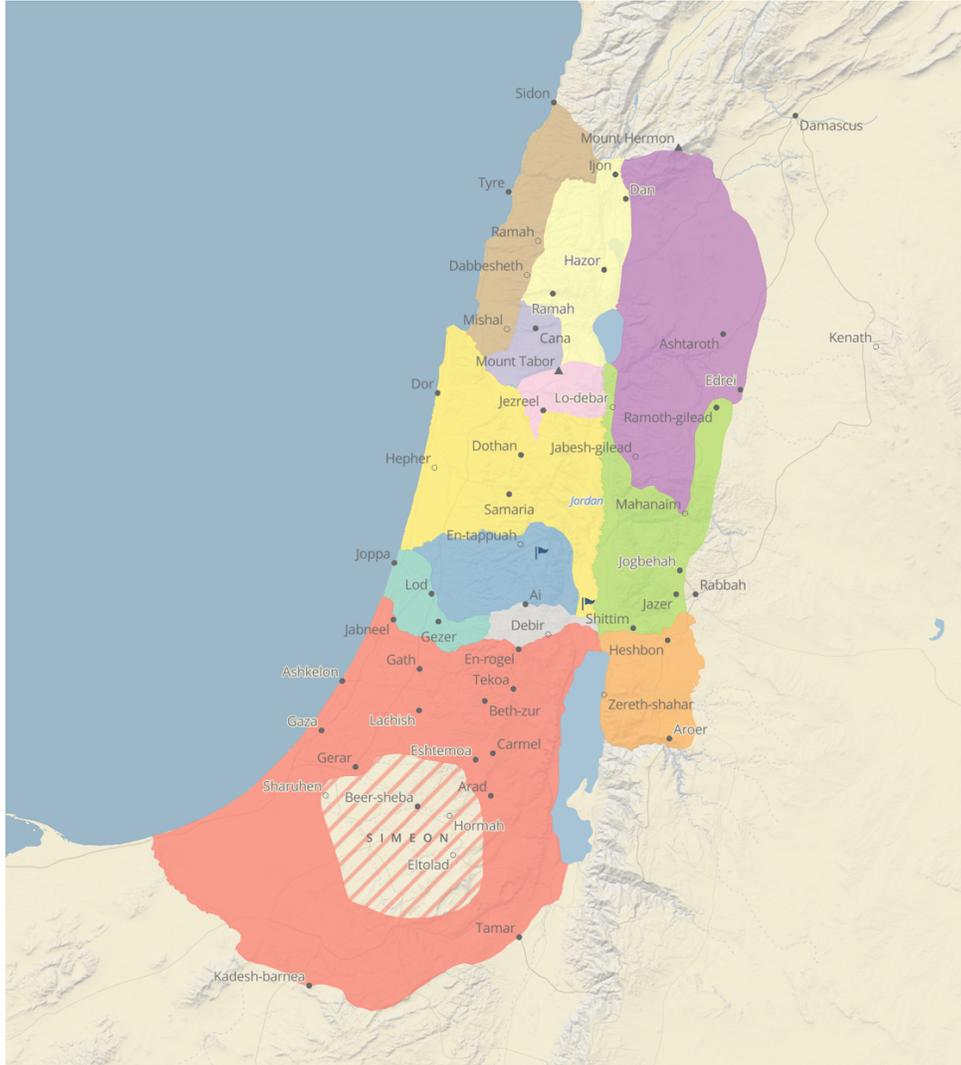
(Holman Bible Atlas)

ii. Territory of Canaan



(from ESV Study Bible)

iii. Tribal Inheritance Boundaries



(Logos Software)

1. Asher
2. Benjamin
3. Dan
4. Ephraim
5. Gad
6. Issachar
7. Judah
8. Manasseh (East)
9. Manasseh (West)
10. Naphtali
11. Reuben
12. Simeon (Striped)
13. Zebulon

4. OUTLINES OF JOSHUA

- a. Martin Woudstra, NICOT
 - i. The Promised Land Conquered (1:1-12:24)
 - ii. The Promised Land Distributed (13:1-22:34)
 - iii. The Promised Land to Be Kept in Covenant Obedience (23:1-24:33)
- b. Dale Ralph Davis, No Falling Words
 - i. Entering the Land (1-4)
 - ii. Taking the Land (5-12)
 - iii. Possessing the Land (13-21)
 - iv. Retaining the Land (22-24)
- c. “Trusting God in a Strange New World” - LWBC Sermon Series
 - i. The Lord Has Spoken – Joshua 1:1-18
 - ii. The Lord is Faithful – Joshua 2:1-5:15
 - iii. The Lord Fights – Joshua 6:1-12:24
 - iv. The Lord Shows Mercy – Joshua 13:1-22:24
 - v. The Lord is Jealous – Joshua 23:1-24:33

5. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOSHUA

- a. Was Born in Egypt & First Appears as a General in the Battle with the Amalekites During Israel’s Desert Travels. (Exodus 17:8-13)
- b. Of the Tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8)
 - i. Ephraim was one of Joseph’s two sons by his gentile wife.
 - ii. The tribe of Ephraim later formed the heart of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- c. Moses Changed His Name from Hoshea to Joshua (Numbers 13:16)
 - i. Hoshea – “salvation”
 - ii. Joshua – “Yahweh is Salvation”
- d. Accompanied Moses on Sinai (Exodus 24:13) & Was on the Mountain When Moses Received the Law. (Exodus 32:17)
- e. One of 12 Spies Sent into Canaan (Numbers 13:8)
 - i. Only He and Caleb Returned with a Positive Report (Numbers 14)
- f. A Minister to/with Moses (Deuteronomy 32:44)
- g. Chosen by the Lord to Succeed Moses (around 90 years old). (Numbers 27:15-23; Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23; 34:9)
- h. Lead the Nation in Covenant Renewal at Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:30-35) & Shechem (Joshua 24:1-28)
- i. Died at 110 Years Old and Buried at Timnath-Serah. (Joshua 24:29-30)

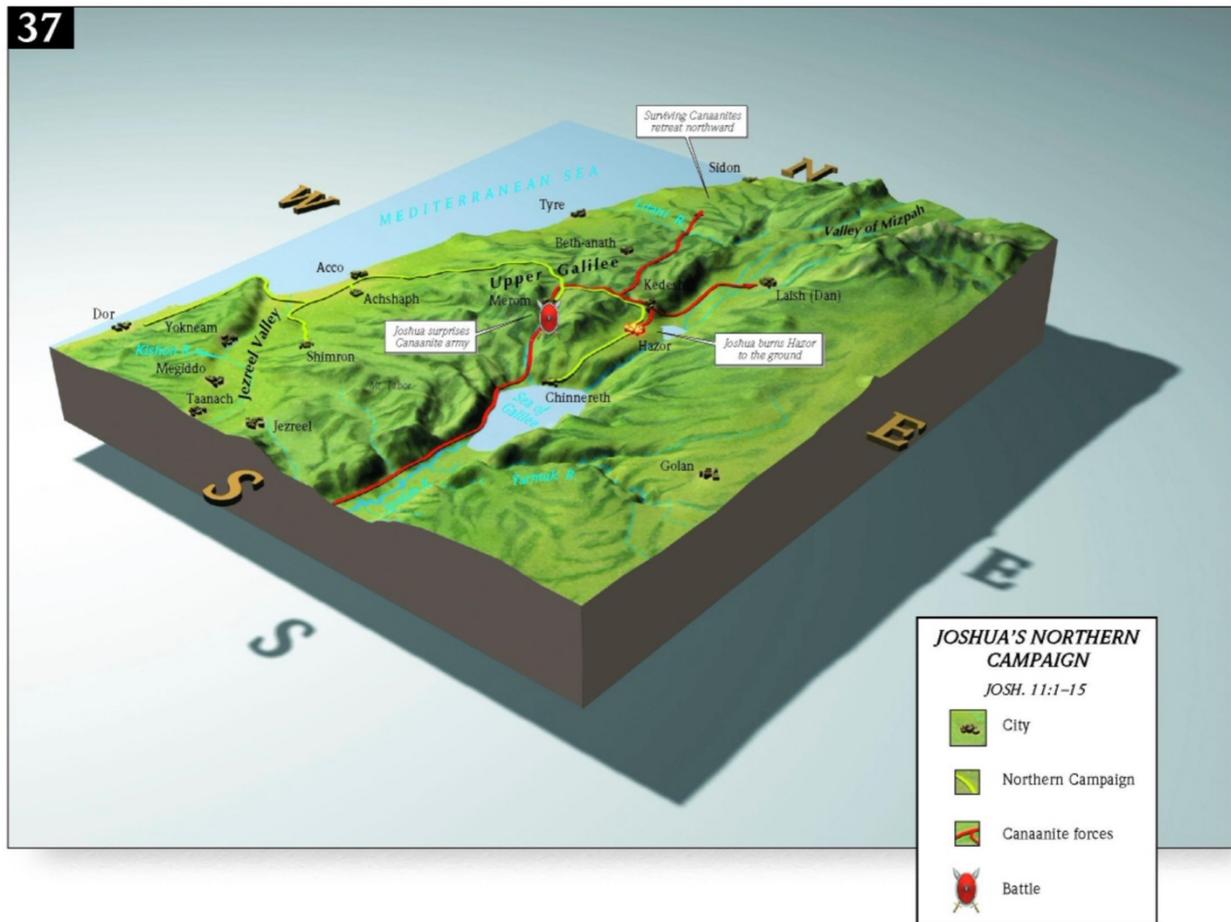
6. THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

- a. The majority of Joshua is concerned with the conquest of Canaan.



(Holman Bible Atlas)

iii. Northern Campaign (Joshua 11)



iv. Summary of Conquered Cities (Joshua 12)

v. Distribution of the Land to Tribes (13-23)

b. The divine command for the conquest of Canaan first originates with Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 15:15, 16) and comes into focus with the ministry of Moses & Joshua (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)

i. ¹⁶ But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷ but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, ¹⁸ that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)

c. Fundamental to the Old Testament is the idea that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the Creator of all there is, and that as the only living God, he owns

all there is. Therefore, he has the right to distribute nations and lands as he wills.

- d. God was patient with the Canaanites. (Genesis 15:16) God held his own people in Egypt for over 400 hundred years allowing the Canaanites time to repent.
- e. The Canaanites weren't innocent. Archaeological study of the inhabitants of Canaan reveal they were engaged in human sacrifice, temple prostitution etc.
- f. When Israel disobeyed, God used other nations to judge Israel in war. (Exile into Assyria & Babylon)
- g. The commands in Deuteronomy and the record of the conquest in Joshua are hyperbolic. In ANE (ancient near east) writings we see the same language used of Israel. We see God speak the same words against Israel in Jeremiah 25:8-10.
- h. God's commands to destroy are primarily directed towards Canaanite idolatry, not Canaanite people. (Deuteronomy 20:16-18) Rahab is an example of someone who received mercy because she recognized Israel's God and abandoned her idolatry.
- i. Israel had no blank check to wage warfare with whomever they chose. God severely punished Israel for warring against those God had not authorized. (1 Samuel 4-6)
- j. Yahweh War was specifically and exclusively for the people of Israel as both the people of God and a theocratic state. Yahweh War isn't for NT church because the church isn't a theocratic state. Jesus adamantly rejected physical violence as a means to advance his cause. (Matthew 26:52) This means any Christian using violence to spread Christianity in the name of God is in sin.
- k. The teaching of Jesus and the Apostles is that while Christians are heavenly citizens living in and looking forward to the Kingdom of God, they are also resident aliens who are called to enter into the culture of their earthly exile. This means we can serve and protect the culture in which we live. (Romans 13:1-4)
- l. God has declared a future time of final judgment when all evil will be destroyed from the earth. If the image of a God who commanded the killing of people in the Old Testament offends you, then you won't like the Jesus of Revelation 19 (Revelation 19:11-21).

7. Final Thoughts

- a. Resolve to have no “Problem Passages.” God’s Word is good. All of it, because God is good.
- b. All of the good promises God gave to Joshua came to pass. And all who are united to the true and better Joshua, Jesus Christ, will rest from their sin and inherit the earth.
- c. The Christian & War
 - i. Can Christians participate in war? Historically, two Christians have divided into two broad camps regarding war: pacifism and just war theory.¹ While many Christians have argued for a pacifist position, I believe the just war theory provides a more biblically faithful approach to understanding war.
 - ii. What is just war theory? Answering this question thoroughly would take a longer essay, but a few points can be made. Just war theory understands war to be evil, yet often unavoidable. The principles of just war theory divide into two broad categories. First, just war theory deals with considerations and conditions which must be met before engagement in war (jus ad bellum). Second, just war theory deals with the conduct of the combatants once war has begun (jus in bello). Theologian Don Carson summarizes both categories well:
 - iii. The only just cause for going to war is defense against violent aggression.
 - iv. The only just intention is to restore a just peace to friend and foe alike.
 - v. Military force must be the last resort after negotiations and other efforts have been tried and failed.
 - vi. The decision to engage in such a just war must be made by the highest governmental authority; war is not a private matter.
 - vii. The war must be for limited ends. In other words, to repel aggression, to redress injustice, not in order to exploit.
 - viii. The means of just war must be limited by proportionality to the offense. In other words, military response must be in kind.
 - ix. There must be no intentional and direct attack on noncombatants.
 - x. War should not be prolonged where there is no reasonable hope of success within these limits.²

¹ For a summary and rebuttal of pacifism, see John and Paul Feinberg’s chapter on war in their book *Ethics for a Brave New World*.

² Carson’s full comments can be heard here: <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/just-war/>

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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