

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”:
A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

THEY GATHERED TOGETHER AS ONE (JOSHUA 9:1, 2)

I. Holy War

- A. Throughout our meditations in the book of Joshua, one theme that stands out very clearly is that of *holy warfare*; the battle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of Satan.
- B. During Joshua’s time, holy warfare took on a specific manifestation—*herem* warfare.
 1. *Herem* can mean two things (Howard Jr., *Joshua*, 181).
 - a. *Herem* can mean to “consecrate something or someone as a permanent and definitive offering for the sanctuary.”
 - b. *Herem* can also mean to “consecrate a city and its inhabitants to destruction.”
 2. In the context of Joshua, this second meaning appears to be the one that is more emphasized.
- C. Where can God’s instructions for this sort of warfare be found?
 1. Exodus 23:31: “And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.”
 2. Numbers 33:51-52: “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places.”
—The destruction of certain people and the things belonging to those people is commanded by God.
- D. Along those instructions that call for Israel to destroy the Canaanite nations, we find another set of passages teaching us that God is the One who destroys those nations.
 1. Exodus 34:24: “For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.”
 2. Deuteronomy 31:3: “The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken.”
- E. *Herem* warfare is Israel’s service to God as well as a event of God’s judgment.

1. Even as Israel obediently expels the nations from Canaan, they are to recognize that it is the Lord God himself who is working through them.
 2. Deuteronomy 9:3 makes the connection between God’s work on the one hand, and Israel’s efforts on the other:
 - “Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. *He* will destroy them and subdue them before you. So *you* shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.”
- F. *Herem* warfare in Joshua looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God’s Kingdom in the world.
1. As we meditate on Israel’s wars in Canaan, we get an impression of what the arrival of the Lord and his holy ones would be like.
 2. The return of the Lord and his holy ones would bring about the destruction of the wicked nations of the world, the execution of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:8), and the full establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord over the world.
 3. It is with this larger understanding of God’s plans that we read Joshua.
- G. The main fact that comes through in 9:1, 2 is the reaction of the Canaanite nations to Israel.
1. This is not the first time we are told of how the nations react to Israel’s arrival.
 2. But this is the first time we see the nations beginning to put up an organized resistance.
 3. In this gathering of the nations against Joshua and Israel, we see a foreshadowing of the gathering of the nations against Christ and his Church.
- H. Whenever the Church of God invades the kingdoms of darkness—whether in the form of *herem* warfare, or evangelization, or personal holiness—God’s people can expect increasing resistance.
- I. This is all the more reason for us to recognize that the battle belongs to the Lord, and to trust in him alone for salvation from our foes.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What form does holy warfare take in Joshua? (2) What does *herem* mean? (3) “*Herem* warfare in Joshua looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God’s Kingdom in the world.” Discuss. (4) What can God’s people expect when they stand with God?

II. Reactions of the Nations to Israel

- A. Let’s consider how the nations were portrayed up to this point.
- B. The very first reference to a foreign nation reacting to Israel’s arrival is in Joshua 2.
 1. In 2:11, Rahab tells the Israelite spies about Jericho’s reaction to Israel’s arrival in the land.

2. Rahab says, “And as soon as we heard it, *our hearts melted*, and *there was no spirit left in any man* because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”
- C. A second reference is in Joshua 5:1, after the Lord had dried up the Jordan:
 - “As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, *their hearts melted* and *there was no longer any spirit in them* because of the people of Israel.”
- D. A possible third response is in 6:27, right after the Lord had defeated the city of Jericho: “So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.”
 - There may have been some admiration of Joshua as well coming from the nations.
- E. A fourth reference is in 7:9.
 1. This is not a projected response.
 2. After Israel had been defeated at Ai, Joshua appeals to the Lord to show mercy.
 3. In his plea, Joshua says these words to the Lord in 7:9: “For the Canaanites and all *the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth*. And what will you do for your great name?”
 4. Joshua is asking the Lord to save Israel from Ai because he knows that if the nations hear that Israel had suffered defeat, their courage would revive and they would band together to destroy God’s people.
- F. In summary, the nations have reacted in fear, awe, and maybe even some degree of admiration.

***Question for reflection:** How have the nations of Canaan reacted to Israel up to this point?

III. The Antichrist Kings and Their Realms (Joshua 9:1)

- A. In verse 1 of chapter 9, we are presented with a list of the enemies of Israel.
- B. 9:1 tells us about *kings*.
 1. In those days, kings were the absolute leaders of their nations.
 2. In those days, religious worship was integrated with royal rule.
 - a. The gods of the kings included...
 - Baal, the god of the storm;
 - Ashtaroth, the goddess of fertility (Jdg 2:13)
 - Chemosh, god of war (Num 21:29)
 - Molech (Lev 18:21)
 - b. While the gods themselves were fictional beings, demons stood behind their cult (Dt 32:17; Ps 106:37).

- c. The Canaanite kings were demon worshipers.
- 3. The kings of Canaan are therefore the opposing counterparts of Joshua.
 - If Joshua is, at this point in time, the Lord’s anointed one, the Lord’s *Christ*, the kings of these nations are the antichrists; the princes of Satan’s civilization.
- C. 9:1 tells us about the *jurisdictions* and *territories* of these antichrist kings.
 - 1. The Scripture says they “were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon...”
 - 2. We are to get a sense of the largeness and diversity of the threat facing Israel.
 - David Howard Jr. writes: “Just as the land that Israel was entering to possess is painted in terms as broad as possible in 1:4, so here, the adversaries Israel was to face are also portrayed as coming from as broad an area as possible” (Howard Jr., *Joshua*, 221).
- D. 9:1 tells us about the *specific nations* that these kings lead: “...the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites...”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What facts does 9:1 present to us? (2) Who were some of the idols worshiped by these Canaanite kings? (3) What were the jurisdictions, territories, and nations of these kings?

IV. The Antichrist Nations

- A. The Scriptures offer clear and direct teaching on the origins of several of these groups.
 - 1. The Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites were all descendants of old man Canaan himself: “Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites,” (Gen 10:15-17)
 - 2. What is so significant about the fact that these nations descended from Canaan?
 - a. Canaan himself was a son of Ham.
 - b. Ham was the perverse son of the prophet Noah, whom Noah cursed back in Genesis 9.
 - Genesis 9:25: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”
 - c. Due in part to that prophetic curse, the Amorites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites were destined to become enemies of their cousin nations—of whom the Israelites were one.
- B. Scripture does not spell out the origins of the *Hittites* and the *Perizzites* in the same detail as it does for the other four.
 - 1. But we know that they must have also descended from one of Noah’s three sons after the flood.

2. Given the close proximity they share with the other descendants of Ham, it is likely that the Hittites and Perizzites are also descendants of Ham as well.
—The Hittites may be descendants of Heth, a son of Canaan (Online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7774-hittites>).
- C. One reason Israel is at war with these nations now is due to the curse the prophet Noah had uttered, condemning Canaan to serve his brothers!

***Questions for reflection:** (1) According to Genesis 10:15-17, who was the ancestor of the Amorites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites? (2) Who was Canaan's father? And why is he significant? (3) How does Noah's curse on Ham, patriarch of the Canaanites, affect the future destiny of the Canaanites?

V. "Because of the Wickedness of These Nations"

- A. But what is the foremost reason Scripture gives for the destruction of these nations?
 1. It has to do with their *evil*, their *perversion*.
 - a. In Deuteronomy 9:4, Moses says to the Israelites: "Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas *it is because of the wickedness of these nations* that the LORD is driving them out before you."
 - b. In Genesis 15:16, the Lord explains why the children of Abram will return to the land only much later: "And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*"
 2. Thus, the reason God calls for *herem* warfare now is not merely because the Canaanites were a cursed people.
 - a. It's because of the great evil of their cultures
 - b. It's because their evil had reached its limit.
- B. What kinds of evil are we talking about?
 1. Deuteronomy 18:9-14 says it is the evil of idolatry and the occult.

⁹"When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. ¹⁰There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer ¹¹or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, ¹²for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. ¹³You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, ¹⁴for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this.

2. Leviticus 18:1-3 says it is the evil of manifold sexual perversion. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and *you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan*, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.
 3. The sins of idolatry, sorcery, and immorality are deeply woven into the fabric of Canaanite culture—these are the sins for which the Lord is judging the nations of Canaan.
- C. Revelation 9:20-21 mentions that these sins would also be rampant just before the Lord returns.
- ²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts
- D. It is also telling that cultures are increasingly tolerant of these sins.
1. Idolatry is excused in the name of religious tolerance.
 2. Sorcery and the occult are deemed alternative spiritualities.
 3. Sexual immorality is cloaked in the language of individual rights and freedom.
- Yet, these are the evils of Canaan that draw the anger of the Lord. Clearly, the sins of Canaan are the sins of all mankind.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the foremost reason Scripture gives for the destruction of these Canaanite nations? What kinds of evil are practiced by the nations? How are these sins practiced, or even encouraged, in this day and age?

VI. The Coalition of Antichrist States (Joshua 9:2)

- A. As soon as all the antichrist, Canaanite kings “heard of this”—and “this” may refer to Israel’s covenant renewal or Israel’s defeat of Ai—“they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel.”
1. Trent Butler comments: “The scene of action widens unexpectedly. No longer does Israel face simply one city-state and its army. She has become so important that coalitions are formed against her” (Butler, *Joshua*, 101)
 2. The Canaanite nations now realize that Israel is a serious threat to their rule and way of life.
 3. They put aside whatever differences they may have, banding together against both Joshua and Israel.
- B. Since *Joshua* is the Lord’s anointed one; the Lord’s chosen prophet leader, and *Israel* is the Church of God, this is nothing less than war against the Lord’s prophet and his Church.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How do the Canaanite nations respond to Joshua and Israel? (2) What is the significance of this banding-together of nations against Joshua and Israel? How does God want us to understand this event?

VII. “The Rulers Take Counsel Together”

- A. We are reminded of the messianic passage, Psalm 2:1-3:
Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
²The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
³“Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”
- B. The kings and rulers of the world will always rebel against the rule of the Lord God and his Anointed One.
- C. This dynamic carries over into the New Testament.
- D. Our Lord Jesus said to his Church: “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn 15:19)

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Psalm 2:1-3 teach us about how the nations naturally respond to the rule of God and his Messiah? (2) What does the Lord Jesus warn his Church in John 15:19?

VIII. “Blessed Are All Who Take Refuge In Him”

The Church of God can expect trouble whenever it does the will of God in the world. This is because God’s will always advances God’s rule, and the world is fundamentally opposed to God’s rule. Therefore, obedience does not necessarily bring comfort. It may in fact bring much more suffering, much more opposition from the world. Yet, God has promised that those who gather against his Christ and his Church will not stand. Therefore, we need to take refuge in God and not in the nations of the world (Ps 2:12). God will fight for his Christ and for his Church, and subdue all our enemies under our feet (Rom 16:20). The battle belongs to the Lord. “Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Ps 2:12).