

# Sermon Outline

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

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### LONGING FOR THE GLORY DAYS (JOSHUA 5:1)

#### **I. Introduction**

#### **II. The Kings of the Amorites and the Canaanites**

- A. In 5:1, the Lord draws our attention away from Israel to the enemy side.
- B. The Holy Spirit turns our attention to the villains of Israel—the enemy *kings*.
- C. The civilizations of these kings are...
  - 1. “the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west.”
  - 2. “the Canaanites who were by the sea.”
- D. Who were the Amorites?
  - 1. They were one of the major civilizations of Canaan.
  - 2. They were descendents of the man Canaan himself (Gen 10:15-16).
    - a. Canaan was the son of Ham.
    - b. Ham was the wicked son of the prophet Noah.
    - c. Ham was cursed by Noah because he violated his father’s dignity (Gen 9:25).
  - 3. The Amorites are a line of cursed people and known for their wickedness like their father Ham.
  - 4. Digression: The doctrine of election and reprobation
    - a. While humanity is sinful and cursed, God distinguishes between those whom he will redeem and those he will not.
    - b. The Amorites represent a human civilization that God has destined for destruction.
    - c. God will save individual Amorites if they repent and join themselves to him.
  - 5. Where do the Amorites live?
    - a. They live “beyond the Jordan to the west.”
    - b. They control the cities of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, and Jerusalem (Josh 10:5).

- E. Who were the Canaanites?
1. With the Amorites, the Canaanites were descendents of Ham—and so share in the curse that placed on him (Gen 9:25).
  2. It is Canaanite religion that interests us the most for two reasons:
    - a. Because religion lies at the heart of the war between the nation of God and the nation of Satan.
    - b. Because our Israelite forefathers will continue to struggle with the temptations of Canaanite religion for a long time to come.
  3. What did the Canaanites believe? Who were their gods?
    - a. Two very popular gods were Asherah and Baal.
    - b. Asherah was the mother goddess of Canaanite religion.
    - c. Baal was the god of fertility and storms (Num 22:41; Hos 2:13, 17).
      - i. Baal was associated with food and survival.
      - ii. Baal was associated with sex.
    - d. Food and sex are the most powerful forces in human life. —No wonder the Israelites were tempted to worship Baal!
  4. During the time of the divided kingdom, the cult of Baal and Asherah was alive and well in northern Israel (1 Kgs 18:19).
- F. What our heavenly Father is giving us here is not some boring historical footnote.  
—These kings in 5:1 are not just political leaders. They represent two very wicked civilizations that are the historic enemies of the sons and daughters of God.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What civilizations do the kings in 5:1 lead? (2) Who are the Amorites? From whom did they descend? (3) Who are the Canaanites? (4) Who were two very popular gods of the Canaanites? What were their functions? (5) Why do you think Baal and Asherah were so tempting to the Israelites? (6) The kings “represent two very wicked civilizations that are the historic enemies of the sons and daughters of God.” Discuss.

### III. The Enemy Kings Hear the Great Works of YHWH (Joshua 5:1)

- A. The kings *heard* about the great works of the Lord God. They heard the news that YHWH stopped the River Jordan for his people and enabled them to cross over.

- B. What happened after these people had received the news?  
—“...their hearts *melted* and there was *no longer any spirit* in them because of the people of Israel.”
- C. Still, repentance was a real option for these rulers.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What did the kings hear about? (2) What happened when the kings heard about what the Lord did for Israel?

#### IV. Longing for the Glory Days

- A. But we feel a major disconnect between Joshua 5:1 and our situation today.
- B. The first difficulty: *The Church of God is not an earthly nation-state like ancient Israel.*
1. The Church is a nation because we do have a Head of State—our Lord Jesus Christ—and a real country—Heaven (Phil 3:20).
  2. Yet, we are not an earthly nation because we have no earthly country to call our final home.
  3. Christians are more like permanent residents or resident aliens in their own lands.
- C. The second difficulty: *The kings of the Canaanites and the Amorites (or their equivalents) are those in power.*
1. Being a member of the Church on earth feels a bit like being a member of Israel in exile.
  2. In 1 Peter 1:1, we are called “elect exiles.”
  3. The kings have put their labels on us. The Church of Jesus Christ is...
    - a. “a non-profit charitable group” not the “Kingdom of God.”
    - b. “a religious group” not “The New Humanity of Jesus the Christ.”
    - c. “an extra-curricula activity” not “The eternal house of God.”
  4. Those labels are not powerless.  
—They can shape our sense of identity and purpose as Christians if we let them.
  5. One evidence that Christians have bought into those labels is the lack of commitment to the church.
    - a. They treat the church like a social club or a therapy group.
    - b. If they do not feel that their tastes are met, they leave.

- c. This buffet style approach to church life is the indirect result of buying the half-truth that the Church is simply a “religious group” or a “non-profit charitable organization.”  
—This is what happens when we allow the rulers of the world to tell us who we are.
  - d. The result is a domesticated Church that has nothing to say to the world.
- D. We feel disconnected from what Joshua 5:1 because we are in a very different situation in history.
- E. God’s people don’t seem to be conquering. Instead, we seem to be the conquered!

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Why do Christians today feel a major disconnect with Joshua 5:1? (2) What are two challenges facing the Church that heighten this disconnect?

## V. Longing for the Day of His Glory

Given our situation in history, how does Joshua 5:1 serve as God’s Word to us today? How does our heavenly Father want to speak to us through this Word?

**Even though the holy Nation of God is in a place of great weakness today, our heavenly Father does not want us to forget where the real power lies. He does not want us to forget that he alone is the Lord and Savior of the nations. And for that reason, God wants us to wait patiently for his Day of Glory. This means enduring the suffering that comes with our minority status and continuing to testify of our God with our words and our lives.**

- A. God does not want us to forget that he alone is the Lord and Savior of the nations.
- B. The Lord Jesus will return in power to take over all rule from earthly kings and liberate his people (Phil 3:20).
- C. Therefore, God wants us to wait patiently for that day of glory.

- D. To wait patient for the Day of the Lord involves enduring the suffering that comes with our minority status.
1. Enduring suffering is one of the things that the apostles of Jesus ask of us (2 Cor 1:6; 2 Tim 2:3).
  2. To endure suffering is not allowing your suffering to destroy your faith in Jesus, forcing you back into sinful (Canaanite) patterns of living.
  3. We endure the suffering that comes with...
    - a. Being a member of a minority religious group—the forced reduction of our Christian identity by secularism.
    - b. Being a Christian in the World of Baal, where food, sex, and other earthly pleasures are worshiped.
  4. How do we endure suffering? We endure suffering when...
    - a. We allow suffering to drive us to prayer, to ask God for help.
    - b. We let suffering teach us to empathize with others who are suffering as well.
    - c. We let suffering make us more patient and compassionate people.
    - d. We let suffering free us from any hopes of glory in this world.
    - e. We use our suffering to increasing our appetite for God.
- E. To wait patiently for the Day of the Lord involves testifying for our Lord with our words and lives while we live in the world.
1. How do we bear witness to the Lord? We do so...
    - a. By keeping alive the testimonies of the Lord in our Churches and homes. (Remember the previous lesson—Joshua 4:21-22)
    - b. By faithfully announcing the kingship of God and his Christ over all nations and powers.
    - c. By keeping the faith and staying Christian in a world of Baal worshipers.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are two things involved with patient waiting on the Lord? (2) What are some ways by which we endure suffering as Christians? (3) How do we continue to bear witness to the Lord?