

# Joshua and the Conquest

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## Hope Community Discussion Guide

### - *A Call to Contemplation*

- There is an astoundingly meaningful statement at the end of Joshua 21; Ma cited it in his sermon: “Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord God had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.” For Christians, this little one-sentence pronouncement bears with it the full weight of our hope, knowing that we will one day stand on the edges of Jordan in a restored earth, look to the great city of God, and say the same. We, as they, also have cause to say it now, since we have already been fully blessed in Christ, and since the fight against death is already won for us by the commander of the Lord’s army, a champion who fought against death in our place and conquered. Though many battles have yet to be fought (chapter 21 is not the last in Joshua) still, the war has been won.

### - *Discussion Guide*

- Joshua the Man, Israel the Nation
  - What similarities do you see between the church today and the nation of Israel in Joshua’s time? What differences? Specifically, what promises were given to Joshua’s people, and what promises are given to us?
  - We see in the book of Joshua God’s wrath breaking out from time to time against Israel, his people, and even against Moses. Does God’s wrath break out against his people today? What does it mean to fear God today, as the Bible tells us to do?
  - Do we still face battles today? What do we do when we are defeated, like Israel is at times? In what ways has God fought in your stead, like he did in Joshua’s time? What promises has he asked us to hold in focus?
- Conquest, and God in the Dock
  - Matt stated, in his sermon, that we as God’s people are no longer called to go to war on God’s behalf. Why did he call Joshua’s people to war, then? What is different between God’s people, then and now, that he might no longer ask us to wage war on his behalf?
  - Read Joshua 5:13-15. This scene occurs right after Israel crosses the Jordan on dry ground. What are the similarities between this scene and the Exodus, when God brought Israel

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out of Egypt? Why are the two so similar, and what is the significance of this scene to the conquest in the rest of the book of Joshua?

- Did God do something immoral or unloving in the conquest? Can we reconcile this God with the God of the New Testament?
- The promises of God, and Joshua as a Type of Christ
  - Besides having the same name, how is Joshua similar to Jesus?
  - Why is the connection between Joshua and Jesus significant to the overarching story of the Bible? What does this connection between the two men say about Joshua, or Jesus, or God's work in the world?
  - In Joshua 24:15, Joshua memorably charges Israel to worship the Lord and him only. Are there other gods in our lives? How can we help each other to serve the Lord and him alone?
- *Discussion Leader Prep Help*
  - Pinckard, I recognize that you preached the sermon this week, so you've already done the prep, but I'll mention just a few things that pertain to these questions.
  - *Joshua the man, Israel the Nation*
    - I've kind of played my cards in the intro, but I think the book of Joshua culminates a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant that, as a whole, is a promise fulfilled in Christ. I know it's strange to talk about the events of several generations as a promise, but a proper view of the sovereignty of God shows us that he is the author of the events of the world, able to speak to us through the history of the world as an author communicates, not just in sentences, but in plot and themes. So, in short, God is speaking through the exodus, wanderings, and conquest, which begs a question: what is he saying? The whole narrative is meant to show us how God intends to remove sin from the world, destroy death, and reconcile us back to him. He tells us that he will adopt sons and daughters into an everlasting family and kingdom, miraculously free them from slavery, remain faithful to them as they fail him, conquer sin on their behalf, and dwell among them in a peaceful land. He completely fulfills this promise to his people in the conquest, but somehow, miraculously, that fulfillment is only a promise of what has now been revealed in Christ. It's like how you love your wife when you marry her, but in some ways that love is a promise of a lifetime spent working out the realities of your love day to day, finally perfect in the next life only because your marriage ends. We say that love grows, but it doesn't. Love is fulfilled.

- *Conquest, and God in the Dock*
  - This was the main bulk of the sermon, and well-handled there, so I'll offer one point of supplement to the idea that God made room for many foreigners among his people. Paul Copan is helpful on this point when he writes of the commonality of totality language in the Ancient Near East (the context of the Old Testament). Basically, people exaggerated in their descriptions of battles as a means of glorifying God. We still do it today: if the Saints win by a wide margin over the Falcons (one day this will happen, if God is good), we commonly say things like, "they slaughtered the Falcons," or "the Falcons couldn't go a yard." We aren't trying to lie, nor do we mean to communicate that the Saints committed some horrific mass homicide to win the game. We are just trying to magnify the win. In the same way, if the Israelites say that they slaughtered every man woman and child, they mean that God is great and won a great victory for them. So often we forget that journalistic realism was not common until the Victorian era. The best example of this totality language is in Joshua 10:40, when Joshua declares that he had devoted to destruction everything that breathed in the entire land. Ironically to modern readers, the very next section of the book begins to list the many peoples Israel had failed to drive out of the land. He wasn't trying to give an accurate account of the war; he was trying to show that God had been incredibly faithful to his people.
- *Promises of God and Joshua as a Type of Christ*
  - Most of what I said in the first section applies here as well. Jesus is the fulfillment of the peace promised by the person of Joshua. He is our champion. My only real contribution is just to ask, how many times do we ask Jesus the same question Joshua asks him in chapter 5: are you for us or against us? And he always responds similarly, that he is fighting on behalf of the Lord. This plays into the judgement comments in the sermon as well. Follow God, love mercy, lest we find, as in the book of John, that the kingdom of God has come against us.