

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES – THE CONQUEST”

## Israel was to conquer the Promised Land – Canaan

### Deuteronomy 7:1-5

<sup>1</sup> When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, <sup>2</sup> and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. <sup>3</sup> You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. <sup>5</sup> But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.

## How do we reconcile this with Jesus’ ethic of love?

- Jesus said, “love your enemies” not “utterly destroy them.”
- doesn’t this show that Bible gives warrant for holy war?

## Answer: Canaan is a small-scale version of what God will do with the whole earth in the New Creation

### Revelation 21:1, 7-8

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ...<sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

### Leviticus 18:24-25

<sup>24</sup> Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, <sup>25</sup> and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

## The conquest was religious and moral, not ethnically based

### Joshua 6:17

And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

### Deuteronomy 13:6-10

<sup>6</sup> If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods,” which neither you nor your fathers have known, <sup>7</sup> some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, <sup>8</sup> you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. <sup>9</sup> But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. <sup>10</sup> You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

## The conquest was not traditional empire-building

### Joshua 6:18-19

<sup>18</sup> But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. <sup>19</sup> But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.

### Joshua 7:20-21

<sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: <sup>21</sup> when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

### Deuteronomy 20:10, 15-17

<sup>10</sup> When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. ...<sup>15</sup> Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. <sup>16</sup> 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, <sup>17</sup> but you shall devote them to complete destruction.

## Judges, “The Conquest” | Notes

### Israel was to conquer the Promised Land – Canaan

**Deuteronomy 7:1-5** – <sup>1</sup> When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, <sup>2</sup> and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. <sup>3</sup> You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. <sup>5</sup> But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.

### This is where a lot of people have problems with the Bible

- isn't this genocide? doesn't this make God a mass murderer?

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

– Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

### Doesn't this give warrant to idea of holy war?

- God is on my side. You guys are pagans – I'm going to utterly destroy you.
- Native Americans, European colonialists, Islamists like ISIS (“kill the infidel”)

### Even within the biblical framework, isn't conquest at odds with Jesus' ethic of love?

- Jesus said, “love your enemies” not “utterly destroy them.”

**Answer: Canaan is a small-scale version of what God will do with the whole earth in the New Creation**

### Remember the basic storyline of the Bible

- Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation
- dramatized in OT: Egypt → Wilderness → Promised Land
- but before New Creation, there will be a Judgment Day
- that is dramatized in the Old Testament by the Conquest of Canaan

**Revelation 21** – <sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ...<sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

### Notice, in the New Creation, there will be *no evil or sin*

- cowards, liars, murderers, the sexually immoral, idolaters will be removed
- necessarily, because if evil and injustice remain, then the New Creation would not be good

### **This is mirrored in Canaan – small-scale version of the New Earth**

- same language of evil and uncleanness is expelled from the Holy Land (miniaturized heaven)

**Leviticus 18:24-25** – <sup>24</sup> Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, <sup>25</sup> and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

### **In other words, God will do this on a large-scale on Judgment Day**

- the whole earth will be cleansed
- Revelation 19 – Christ as divine warrior, flaming sword and he will destroy evil

### **Idea of “redemptive violence”**

- illus: listening to interview with Quentin Tarantino – *Inglorious Bastards, Django Unchained*
- interviewer – aren’t you just using these stories as a cover to engage in blood-soaked violence?
- deep within us, we long for redemptive violence | retributive violence is a good

### **This is why in Deuteronomy 7, heavy emphasis on destroying idols of Canaan**

- v. 5 – “*but thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.”*
- land is being cleansed of idolatry and evil

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### **The conquest was religious and moral, not ethnically based**

- Canaanites are being destroyed, not because they’re Canaanites, but because of their idolatry
- this is not genocide, not ethnic cleansing

### **First – not all Canaanites were killed**

**Joshua 6:17** – And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

### **Rahab is spared – why?**

- because she confessed the God of Israel and acted on her belief
- notice also Rahab is a prostitute! What ultimately matters is repentance and faith.

### **Second – simply being an Israelite not enough to live**

**Deuteronomy 13:6-10** – <sup>6</sup> If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods,” which neither you nor your fathers have known, <sup>7</sup> some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, <sup>8</sup> you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. <sup>9</sup> But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. <sup>10</sup> You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

### **This is not ethnic cleansing because apostate Israelites were also killed**

- because the land was to be holy | this is a miniaturized New Creation where there is no evil

### **This is why *pagan Canaanites were not to be spared***

- because they would entice and tempt Israelites to follow their gods
  - Deut. 7: 2 – “make no covenant with them or show mercy to them”
  - Deut. 7: 3 – “no intermarriage” – why? because “turn away hearts to serve other gods” (ex. Solomon)
  - side note: miscegenation laws cited these verses, but complete misunderstanding
  - interracial marriage was not forbidden – inter-faith marriage was forbidden (ex. Rahab, Ruth, Moses)
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### **The conquest was not *empire-building in traditional sense***

#### **First – empire is *strong beating up the weak***

- Israel was vastly outnumbered and bullied by stronger nations | Deut. 7:1 – “more numerous and mightier”
- Canaanites had superior military technology – chariots, fortified cities, larger armies
- this is why Israel used ridiculous battle tactics – march around Jericho, Gideon’s 300
- in traditional empire-building, you have religion to justify power | but this is clearly not case

#### **Second – empire is *exploitation and profiteering***

- Israel was not to keep any plunder or enslave the population
- motivation not self-enrichment, but divine judgment

**Joshua 6:18-19** – <sup>18</sup> But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. <sup>19</sup> But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.

### **All *perishable pagan objects (of great worth) was to be destroyed***

- all precious metals were to be melted down and deposited in the treasury
- no personal gain

**Joshua 7:20-21** – <sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: <sup>21</sup> when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

### ***Achan is severely punished for coveting pagan treasure***

- “beautiful cloak” – clothing was immensely valuable in ancient world

### **Third – Israel was *not to continue the conquest beyond the prescribed borders of the Promised Land***

- only the land of Canaan was subject to total destruction and cleansing
- all other lands were to be left alone
- and, in fact, even within Canaan, death was not absolutely necessary – “driven out,” “dispossessed”

### **Radically *different policy for cities outside of Canaan***

**Deuteronomy 20:10, 15-17** – <sup>10</sup> When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. ...<sup>15</sup> Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. <sup>16</sup> 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, <sup>17</sup> but you shall devote them to complete destruction.