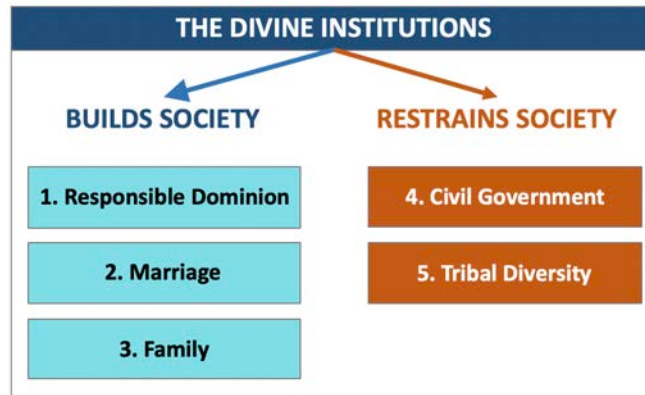
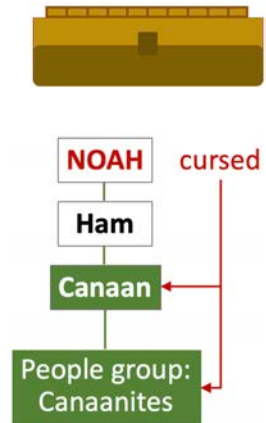


Lesson 16: The Period of the Conquest

Previously...

In the first five books of the Bible, we learnt that:

- **God created the world perfect.** He did not create evil, sin, pain and suffering. All that came with the Fall.
- **When mankind became too evil, God judged the whole world** with the global Flood. He supernaturally destroyed all rebellious people on earth, saving only the eight who trusted Him (Noah and his family).
- **After the Flood, Noah acted as God's prophet.** Noah cursed the future people of Canaan for their evil ways (Genesis 9:20–27). He was referring to a future day when the Canaanites would become so corrupted that God would destroy them.
- It was also after the Flood that God put in place the **fourth divine institution of civil government**. God knew the kind of evil society people would have to live in and so He put in place controls that would limit evil. He gave people the power to restrain evil through capital punishment and deadly force.



- **Up to this point, God had revealed Himself to all people** by directly communicating with Adam and Eve and their descendants. But mankind had continually chosen to reject God. In fact, they rejected God even after the great Flood by building for themselves the Tower of Babel.
- So God judged the people at Babel, scattering them and putting in place the **fifth divine institution of tribal diversity**. Again, this was to slow down the spread of evil. By separating mankind into tribes and nations, God could judge an evil people group without judging all of mankind. He could also use one people group as His instrument of judgment on another.

- Because mankind as a whole had continually rejected God, **to preserve His history and truth, God interrupted history and called Abraham** out of the evil culture. From then on, God revealed Himself to Abraham instead of to everyone. He promised Abraham (i) land, (ii) descendants, and (iii) that he would be a worldwide blessing. God was going to offer reconciliation to mankind through Abraham’s family line.
- Due to famine in the land that God gave Abraham, his grandson Jacob moved his whole family to Egypt. There, Jacob’s 12 sons grew from a family of 70 people into an entire nation of 2.4 million called Israel.
- After generations of living in Egypt, Israel became enslaved by the Egyptians. God then judged Egypt through a series of plague judgments. The final one was death to all firstborn men and livestock whose homes did not have the blood of the sacrificial animal on the doors. The angel of death supernaturally carried out this judgment. This was how God rescued the Israelites out of slavery, proving that He alone is God.
- While in the desert, **God built Israel into a nation** by giving them His values, ethics and law. All that God taught them was in total conflict with the self-serving values of the increasingly wicked and evil pagan nations around them.
- At this point in history, God had set the stage for the next major event. Three truths we have studied were now in place:

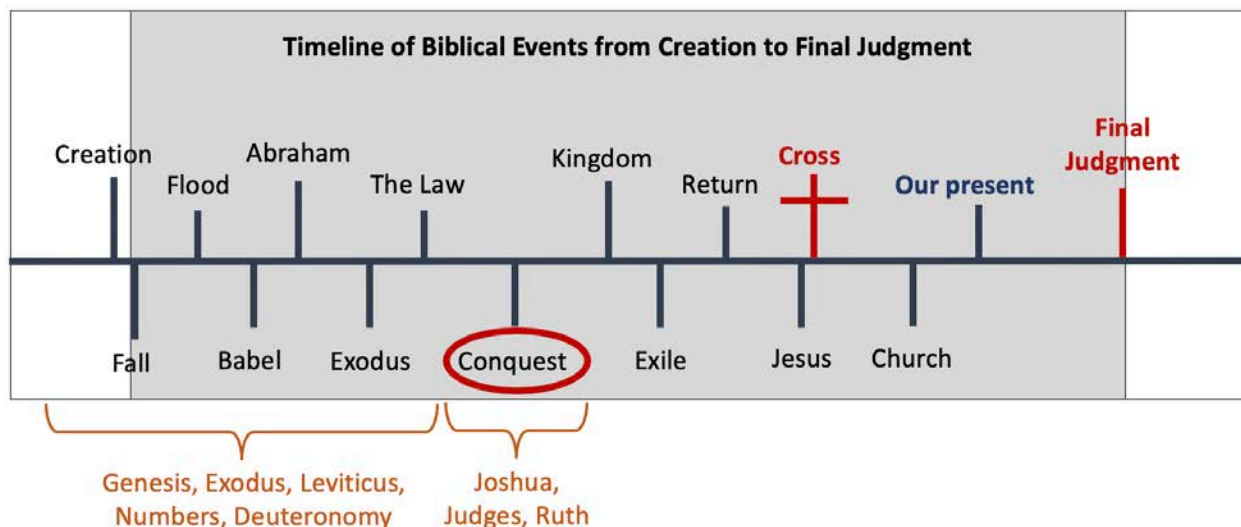


- (i) Noah’s prophecy cursing Canaan, the son of Ham, could now be fulfilled;
- (ii) Israel now had the civil authority through the fourth divine institution to use deadly force and carry out capital punishment; and
- (iii) God could now use the fifth divine institution of tribal diversity to direct Israel to judge the fully corrupted tribe of Canaan and its closely-linked tribes.

Evil Canaanites cursed





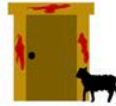


Civil Government to restrain evil

Tribal Diversity to restrain evil










Conquest

After giving the Israelites the law in the desert of Sinai, **Yahweh was going to lead them into the land of Canaan**, the land that He had promised to Abraham. Importantly, God was going to teach Israel about what it means to have spiritual life.

Pagan Kingdom of Man Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas	Kingdom of God Based on GRACE God would save man
 Babel  Egypt  Canaan	Election
	 God chose Abraham
	 God saved Israel
	 God built Israel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Law ▪ National anthem ▪ Temple worship ▪ Feasts & festivals
	 God taught Israel about spiritual life: Period of the Conquest

Review of the Covenants

To better understand the time of the Conquest, we need to review the covenants that God made and understand the difference between His unconditional and conditional promises.

	 Noahic Covenant	 Abrahamic Covenant	 Mosaic Covenant
 Parties	God, mankind, animals	God, Abraham and descendants	God and the 12 tribes of Israel (sons of Jacob)
 Promises	No future global floods	Land , descendants, worldwide blessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for obeying all the laws • Cursings for disobeying the laws
 Signatories	God alone (with the rainbow)	God alone (with the animal halves)	God (with the sign of the Sabbath)
Who is responsible?	God	God	God and Israel (Mutual obligation)
 Type	Unconditional	Unconditional	Conditional Dependent on whether Israel obeys

Unconditional: In the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, God Himself made the promises and He alone would fulfil them. People did not need to do anything.

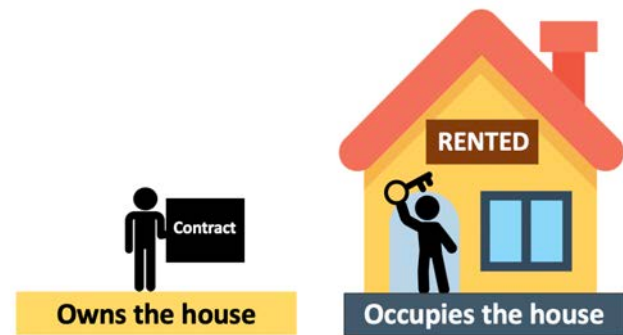
Conditional: The Mosaic Covenant was different. God promised blessings for the people's obedience and cursings for disobedience. There was mutual obligation. Both God and Israel had responsibilities in this covenant.

At this point in history, God was going to start His programme to fulfil His promise of land.

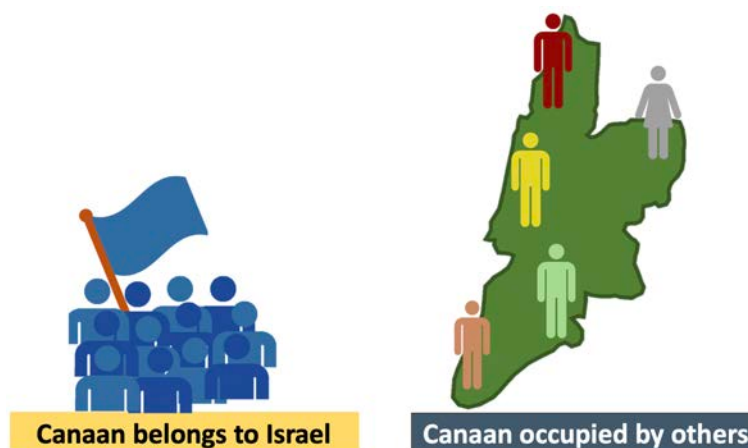
- In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised Abraham and his descendants land. God guaranteed that Israel has **unconditional OWNERSHIP of the land**.
- But now, for Israel to **POSSESS the land**, Israel must obey God. This is conditional.
 - If they obey, they will be blessed and enjoy the land.
 - If they disobey, they will be cursed.

But what is the difference between ownership and possession?

To explain it another way, just imagine you owned a house and you rent it out to your friend. The ownership of the house is yours but your friend has possession of it.



Similarly, the land that God promised Abraham belonged to the Israelites. They owned it because God gave it to them. However, they currently did not possess it. When the Israelites came out of Egypt and were in the desert, the land they owned was occupied by many other different people groups. For the Israelites to possess the land, these groups would have to be evicted.





When God gave the Israelites instructions on moving into the land, He told them to destroy every living thing.

Deuteronomy 20:16–17

¹⁶ In those towns that the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing. ¹⁷ You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.



Many people who read this section of the Bible think that God is evil!

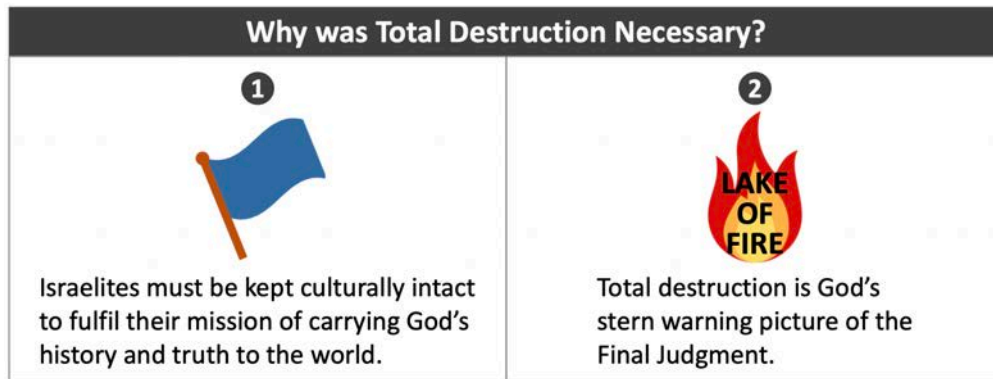
- How can a God who is loving command such bloody wars?
- Why can't God accept religious tolerance?
- Why can't there be peace?

They think that people who follow such a God must be insane or religious fanatics.

Even among believers, many either avoid this topic because they can't understand what is going on, or they start believing the accusations and also think badly of God.

Is our loving Creator-God, Yahweh, really evil? Can we trust such a God?

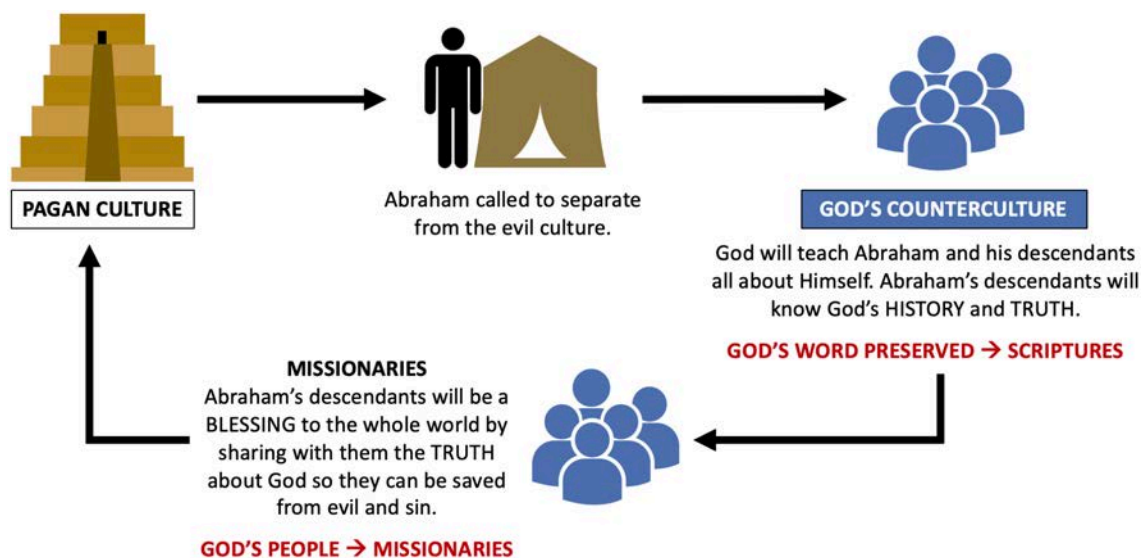
It is critical that we understand clearly why God gave such instructions and what was happening. We will examine two reasons why God insisted on total destruction.



1. Total destruction was necessary because the Israelites must be kept pure (uncorrupted) to carry God's history and truth to the rest of the world.

God's purpose for Abraham and his family was that they would be a counterculture to the evil pagan life mankind had chosen for themselves. Through them, God would preserve His history and truth to be shared with the whole world.

The job the Israelites had was very important. It would affect all mankind.



To represent Yahweh well, the Israelites were instructed to lead pure and holy lives to reflect God's character. Most importantly, they must not worship any other god.

But the Israelites had a bad track record. In Egypt, they had worshipped Egyptian gods. In the desert, they had forced Aaron to build them a calf idol that they worshipped. In moving into the Promised Land, God did not want them to be deceived into worshipping idols and engaging in the evil practices He detested.



God also did not want them to intermarry because He knew that their spouses would turn their hearts against Him. Yahweh insisted that they must not blend in with evil culture and learn from their wicked ways. They must not lose the mission to which God had called them for. This is what God said.

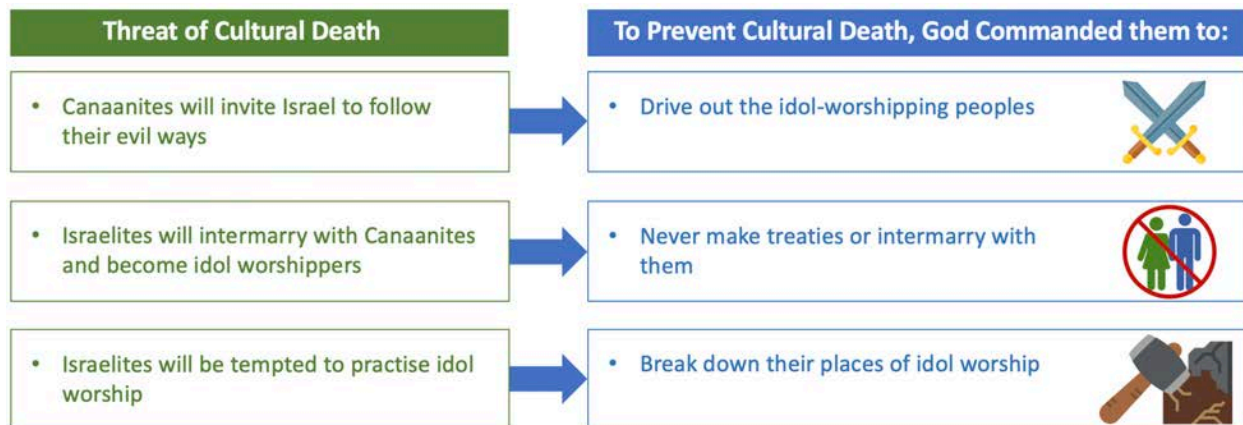


Exodus 34:11–16

¹¹ But listen carefully to everything I command you today. Then I will go ahead of you and drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ¹² “Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped.

¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. ¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, for the LORD, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you. ¹⁵ “You must not make a treaty of any kind with the people living in the land. They lust after their gods, offering sacrifices to them. They will invite you to join them in their sacrificial meals, and you will go with them.

¹⁶ Then you will accept their daughters, who sacrifice to other gods, as wives for your sons. And they will seduce your sons to commit adultery against me by worshipping other gods.



God wanted people to see the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. So He instructed them to totally destroy the people living in the Promised Land. God's instructions at this time in history represented one of the most controversial topics in the Bible.

Essentially, God was calling for (i) holy war, (ii) genocide, (iii) intolerance and (iv) a rejection of peaceful co-existence.

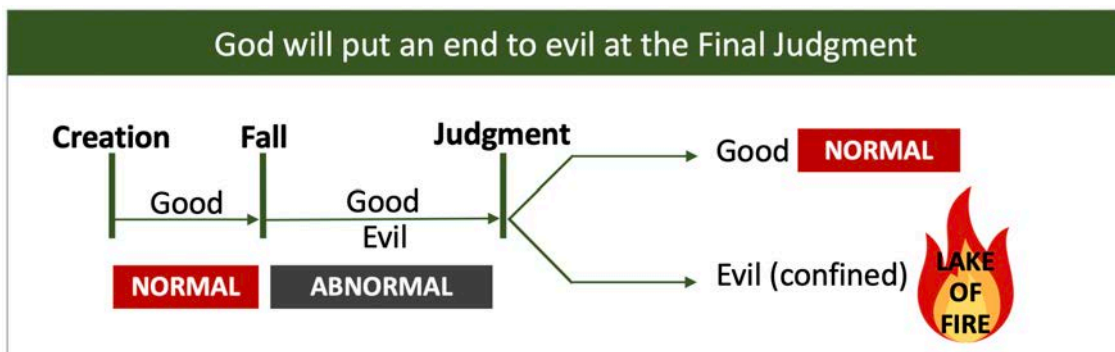
For the next 400 years, Israel would be at war with her neighbours. They would win some of the battles, but also lose some. Whenever Israel tried to settle down into a peaceful co-existence with their neighbours and accept and adopt their neighbours' religious beliefs, Yahweh Himself stirred up new battles and continued the war.

But there was a second reason why God called for total destruction.



2. Total destruction in the Holy War is a stern warning picture of the Final Judgment.

God created the world perfect and “normal”. But after the Fall, sin, evil, pain and suffering made the world “abnormal”. However, God will not tolerate this evil forever. As a perfect, righteous and loving God, He does not want people to live in sin. So God will put an end to evil. There will come a day of judgment where God will separate good from evil forever.



Specifically:

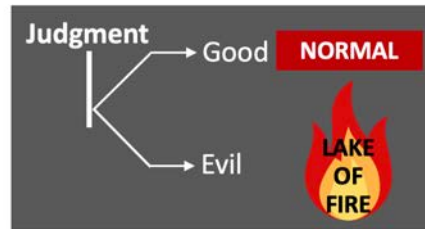
- Evil will be forever confined in the lake of fire.
- God will restore “normal” and have all creation good and perfect once again.

God wants people to have a picture of what that final judgment will look like. The picture of the holy war will serve as a warning of the terrible and inescapable final judgment. At that time, no one will be able to say they had no idea or warning of how destructive that final day will be.



The Holy War...

...is a picture of...



...the Final Judgment

Holy War in the Period of the Conquest and The Final Judgment

What will that final judgment look like? What will happen on that day when God separates good and evil? Three things are true of both the period of the Conquest and the Final Judgment.

I	II	III
There will be a time of grace	Salvation will be for anyone who puts their trust in Yahweh	Devastating and final judgment will come

I. There will be a time of grace.

When God made the covenant with Abraham promising him land, descendants and that he would be a worldwide blessing, God also told him about what would happen in his future.

Genesis 15:13–21

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.

¹⁵ (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.)

¹⁶ After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction. ¹⁷ After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸ So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— ¹⁹ the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

When God was speaking to Abraham, God said the “sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction”. This meant that during Abraham’s time, the sins of the people group, the Amorites, were not yet so great that they needed to be destroyed. However, this indicated that there would come a time when their sins would be so great that Yahweh would indeed destroy them.



God also told Abraham that after 400 years, the Israelites would return to the land and occupy it. They would take over the land that all the people groups (including the Amorites) would be living in. The Bible calls this whole area the “land of Canaan”. This is modern-day Lebanon, Israel and parts of Jordan and Syria. In the Bible, the name “Canaanite” is often used as a general term to include all the people groups who lived in Canaan.



The Canaanites were described in the Bible as a large group of brutal and aggressive people who were extremely wicked. They worshiped all kinds of man-made idols, engaged with demons in witchcraft and practised child sacrifice, incest and bestiality (sex between humans and animals).

Deuteronomy 18:9–12

⁹“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. ¹⁰ For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, ¹¹ or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. ¹² Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the LORD your God will drive them out ahead of you.

In fact, their sins were so disgusting and sickening to Yahweh that He told the Israelites that the land would vomit them out. That was how repulsed God was by these people.

Leviticus 18:24–25

²⁴ “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for the people I am driving out before you have defiled themselves in all these ways. ²⁵ Because the entire land has become defiled, I am punishing the people who live there. I will cause the land to vomit them out.

Yahweh knew that a time would come when the Canaanites would become so wicked that He would use the Israelites to destroy them. The Canaanites were not innocent, righteous people.



Yahweh is God of the universe and God of all history. People might rebel against Him, deny that He exists and live however they want to, but He still holds everyone, believer and unbeliever, accountable for all their choices, actions and sins.

Psalm 14:1–3

¹ Only fools say in their hearts,
 “There is no God.”
 They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;
 not one of them does good!
² The LORD looks down from heaven
 on the entire human race;
 he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
 if anyone seeks God.
³ But no, all have turned away;
 all have become corrupt.
 No one does good,
 not a single one!

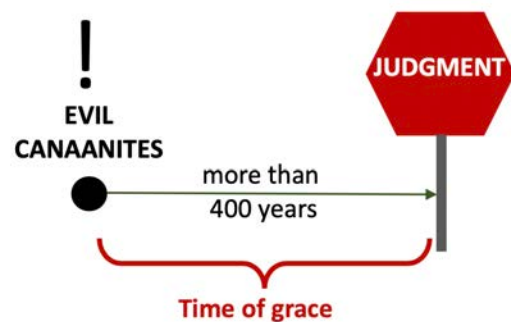
Romans 1:18–21

¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

Biblical holy war is against the wicked, those who have rebelled against God despite the maximum grace that He had shown them.

For the Canaanites, Yahweh had given them 400 years to repent of their evil ways. This wasn’t a short time. He patiently waited during this time of grace but they did not change.

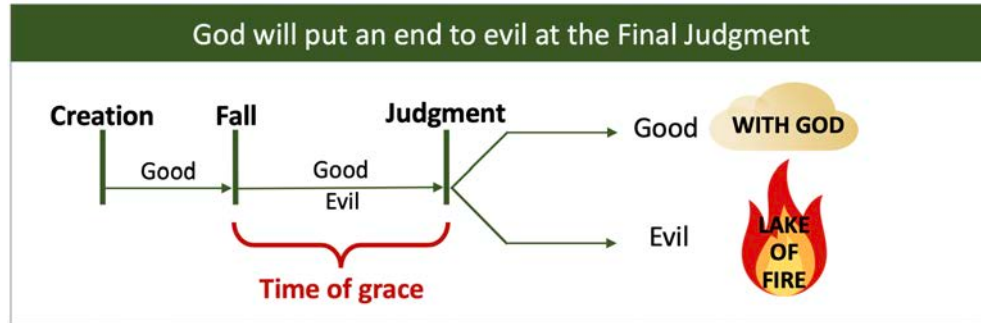


Picture of the Final Judgment

Like in the Conquest period, all mankind will have a time of grace before the final judgment.

- The age that we are now living is the “time of grace”. Final judgment has not yet come.
- For each person, their own lifetime is the “time of grace”. They have not yet died.

The time of grace is the time for people to repent and turn to the Creator-God of the universe.



II. Salvation will be for anyone who puts their trust in Yahweh.

Some people wonder if God is “racist”. They wonder if His instruction to destroy the people groups is some form of “ethnic cleansing”. Did He indeed plan to save only the Israelites and get rid of everyone else? No.

In the account of the Exodus, God saved all who trusted Him, whether they were Israelites, Egyptians or others. The Bible called the people who left Egypt “a mixed multitude”, meaning there were non-Jews among the Israelites (Exodus 12:38).

In the account of the Conquest, the Bible includes the record of two very interesting women, Rahab and Ruth. These two accounts are very important because they prove that God does not discriminate against any ethnic group.



Rahab

Rahab was not an Israelite. She was a Canaanite prostitute living in Jericho, one of the strongholds of the wicked, idol-worshipping Canaanite religion. She lived during the time that Israel was supposed to conquer the land of Canaan. We learn in Joshua 2–6 that Rahab hid two Israelite spies and protected them from being captured by the king of Jericho. Because of what she did, Israel was able to conquer Jericho.

Even though Rahab was not an Israelite, she believed in Yahweh. She heard God’s history and believed that He is the true God of heaven and earth.

Joshua 2:8–11

⁸ Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them.

⁹ “I know the LORD has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. ¹¹ No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.”

What Rahab said was very interesting! From her testimony, we know that the other people groups knew that Yahweh had given the land to Israel. They knew about how God supernaturally rescued Israel from Egypt. They knew God was with Israel.



With all this information, Rahab chose to believe in Yahweh. This is truly a picture of conversion: how a Gentile woman heard the message of God and put her faith in Him. She was different from the other people in Jericho. Even though they too knew about Yahweh, they chose to be rebellious. They chose unbelief.

Even the New Testament talked about Rahab's faith in the true God.

Hebrews 11:31

It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

God saved Rahab's life and she joined the Jews. She lived among the Israelites and later married a man from the tribe of Judah named Salmon. Though God instructed the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites, God saved this Canaanite prostitute and her family from death because she and her family put their faith in Him! God is not "racist" or discriminatory.

And to prove the point even further, God put Rahab in the family line of King David who is the ancestor of Jesus, God Himself! Rahab, this ex-Canaanite prostitute who put her faith in Yahweh, became one of God's people.

But she was not the only Gentile whom God saved at the time of the Conquest.



Ruth



Ruth was also not an Israelite. She was a Moabite woman. She lived in Moab during the time of the Judges when Israel was supposed to continue conquering the land of Canaan.

The Moabites were one of the most mistrusted and despised enemies of Israel because they were constantly at war with Israel and they worshipped idols. God was not pleased with them and in fact, gave a law that no Moabite was allowed to participate in any Israelite religious gathering for up to 10 generations!

Deuteronomy 23:3–6

³ “No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants for ten generations may be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. ⁴ These nations did not welcome you with food and water when you came out of Egypt. Instead, they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in distant Aram-naharaim to curse you. ⁵ But the LORD your God refused to listen to Balaam. He turned the intended curse into a blessing because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ As long as you live, you must never promote the welfare and prosperity of the Ammonites or Moabites.

What was worse was that the Moabites caused Israel to commit the very sins that God warned them against!

Numbers 25:1–4

¹ While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women. ² These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the gods of Moab. ³ In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD’s anger to blaze against his people.

⁴ The LORD issued the following command to Moses: “Seize all the ringleaders and execute them before the LORD in broad daylight, so his fierce anger will turn away from the people of Israel.”

However, amidst this setting, the Bible records the account of an Israelite man who fled to Moab with his family during a time of famine. He took Ruth for his wife. In time, Ruth’s husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law all passed away, leaving only the women: herself, her sister-in-law, Orpah, and mother-in-law, Naomi.

Ruth’s mother-in-law, Naomi, told both her daughters-in-law to go back to their families. So Orpah did that. But Ruth refused to leave. Instead, she chose to stay with Naomi and live as an Israelite. This is another amazing story of conversion. Ruth chose to put her trust in Yahweh and make Him her God.




Ruth 1:15–16

¹⁵ “Look,” Naomi said to her, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same.” ¹⁶ But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.”

Ruth lived in a time when the father or husband chose the family’s religion. Yet Ruth courageously and independently chose to abandon the false gods of Moab and instead chose Yahweh to be her God and the Israelites to be her people.

When Naomi and Ruth moved back to the land of the Israelites, God led Ruth to a husband, Boaz, who was the son of Salmon and Rahab. God also made Ruth, a Moabite woman, an ancestor in the line of Jesus. God saved this non-Jew because of her faith in Him.

Both Rahab and Ruth became part of God’s people not by birth or blood line but because they actively chose to trust in Yahweh.

Pagan Kingdom of Man Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas	Kingdom of God Based on GRACE God would save man
 Canaanites	 Ruth Rahab 

Amazingly, Ruth’s great-grandson David had Moabite blood and should have been banned from taking part in Israelite religious gatherings. But because of David’s faith in God, Yahweh made him king of Israel and even allowed him to lead in worship services!

Without the records of Rahab and Ruth, it would be easy to accuse God of unfairness and racism during the whole Conquest period. So these two accounts are critical because they reveal more of the truth. They show us that God does not discriminate ethnically.

God destroys those who are wicked, sinful and continually rebellious. But He saves those who have faith in Him—even non-Jews. In fact, God included not two, but four Gentile women in the genealogy of Jesus:

- Tamar (Canaanite)
- Rahab (Canaanite)
- Ruth (Moabite) and later
- Bathsheba (probably a Hittite).

Why did God do this?

Yahweh was probably foreshadowing how He intended to save both Israelites and Gentiles through Jesus.

This is what the apostle Paul later said:

Romans 1:5

Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

It’s important to understand that when God called for the destruction of the Canaanites, they were not innocent or “good” people that God was destroying. They were very wicked people who were rebellious towards God.

And yet, we see that God offers salvation for anyone who puts their trust in Yahweh, even if they came from a wicked people group.



Picture of the Final Judgment

God does not show favouritism. As with all mankind, regardless of ethnicity, history, upbringing, wealth, etc., we have a choice to rebel against God like the Canaanites or trust God like Rahab and Ruth. Our trust or faith in God, and not anything else, will determine our eternal destiny.



What is true of the time of the Conquest as well as Final Judgment is that (i) there will be a time of grace and (ii) salvation will be for anyone who puts their trust in Jesus.

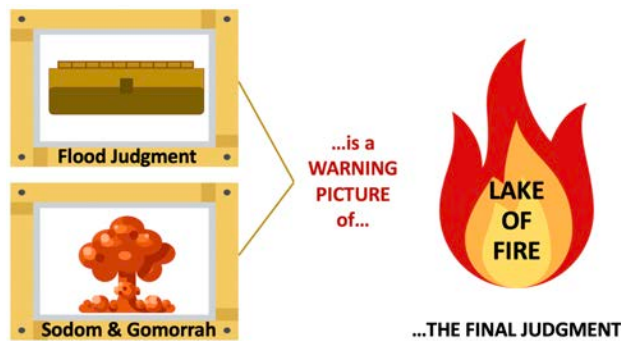
However there is one more lesson.

III. Devastating and final judgment will come.

The holy wars during the time of the Israelite conquest is a foreshadow and a warning of what the end will be like. The Bible says the accounts in the Old Testament are an example for us as to what will happen to ungodly people.

2 Peter 2:5–6

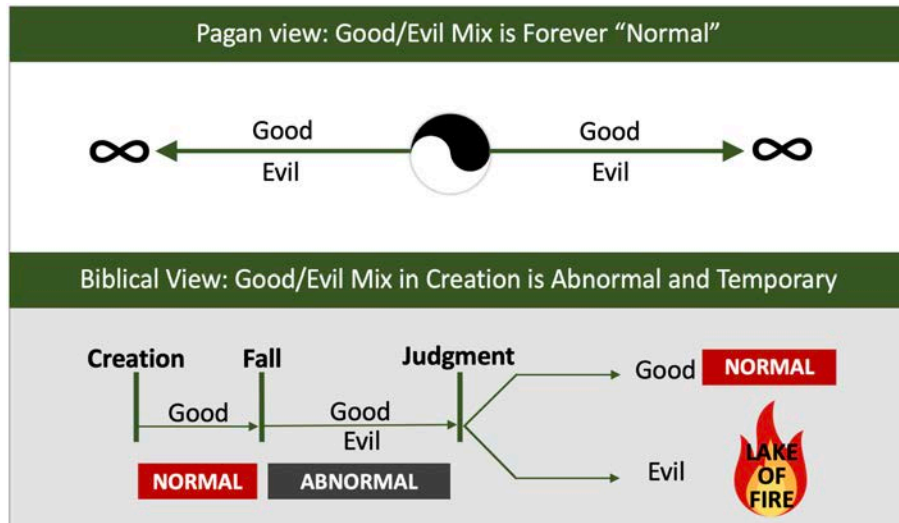
⁵ And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment. So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood. ⁶ Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people.



Picture of the Final Judgment

At the end of history, the separation of good and evil will be final. God will destroy evil permanently. The Conquest is a picture of how the final judgment will be like during the events described in Revelation. It will be a very frightening day of no escape, no second chances and no change of mind. There will be no negotiations and no tolerance.

Only in the Bible is evil limited and bounded. Only in the Bible does evil, sin, pain and suffering come to an end. Nowhere else will we find teaching that God will put an end to evil.



If the time of the Conquest bothers us, it should. It should serve as a warning for those who are rebellious towards God. The final “Great White Throne Judgment” is what the Conquest is picturing.



Revelation 20:11–15

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. ¹² I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.



The Books

Contains the record of the deeds of unbelievers



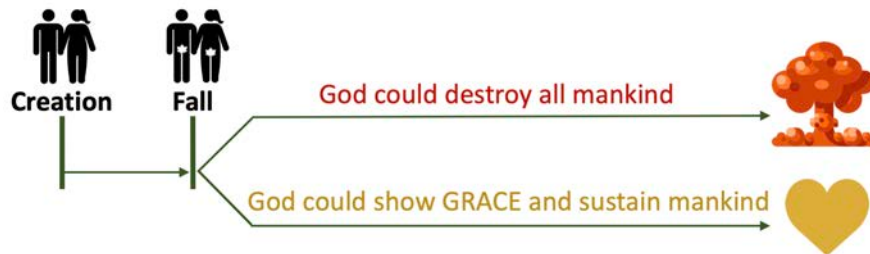
The Book

The Book of Life—
Contains the names of believers

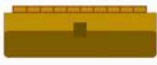







This Great White Throne judgment is reserved for people who have rejected God and have not put their trust in Him while they were alive.

If God is loving, merciful and gracious, how can He command unprovoked aggression?

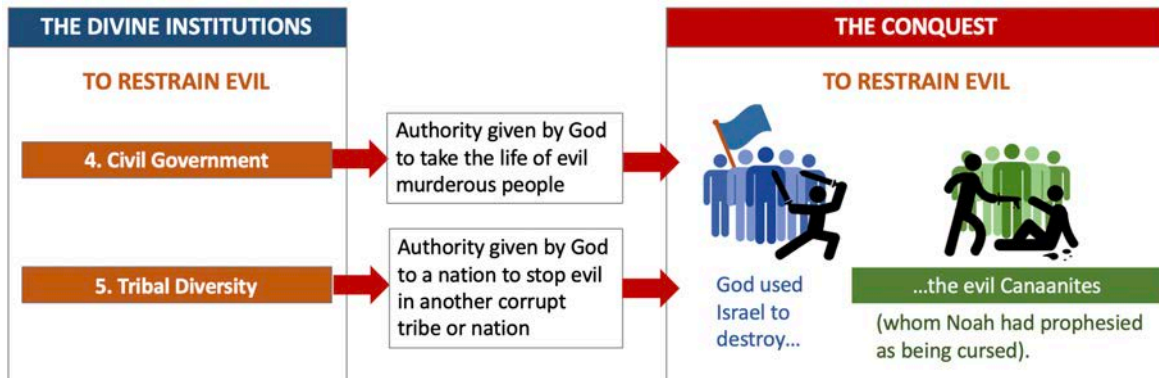
First, we need to remember that since the Fall, mankind has been living under God's grace. At the Fall and even after, God had every right to totally eliminate mankind. God created man. Man rebelled against God. Yahweh could have decided to destroy man totally. There was no need for God to keep man alive and provide for man. As Creator, Yahweh has the right to give and take life as and when He wishes. God's preservation of human life is not something that mankind deserves. He keeps man alive because of His grace. But grace has a limit.



Second, we also need to remember that twice before the Conquest, God had put a stop to the lives of those who had surpassed the limits of His grace. In the global Flood He literally destroyed an entire civilisation with only Noah and his family finding grace before Him (Genesis 6:8). Then during the tenth plague of the Exodus, God used the angel of death to kill every firstborn man and animal not in a home whose door was covered with the gracious blood of a sacrificial lamb. The only difference between these two previous end-of-grace judgments and the Conquest judgment was what caused the death. The previous judgments were carried out through natural and angelic forces, but now the Conquest judgment was carried out by the nation of Israel.

God's judgment on those whose sins were greater than He was temporarily willing to tolerate		
Event	Who Died	God caused death through:
 The Global Flood	 Everyone on earth (except Noah and his family)	 Nature
 The Exodus	 All firstborn from a house whose door was not covered by the blood of a lamb	 The angel of death
 The Conquest	 The wicked Canaanites whom God had shown grace to for many years	 The Israelites

Third, we need to see that Yahweh continues the practice of judging those who have rebelled beyond the limits of His grace. He instructed the new nation of Israel to use its God-given civil authority to stop the evil behaviour of the fully corrupted Canaanite tribes that occupied the land belonging to the family of Abraham. In other words, God used the fourth divine institution (lethal authority of civil governments) and the fifth divine institution (tribal diversity) when He instructed Israel to be His instrument of judgment. In this way, Yahweh fulfilled the prophecy that Noah spoke over Ham's son, Canaan, saying that Canaan was cursed (Genesis 9:25–26).



Fourth, God saw holy war as a separate category from ordinary warfare. In ordinary warfare, God allowed grace and peace. He did not command the complete destruction of all the people. These were His separate instructions for ordinary warfare.

Deuteronomy 20:10–15

¹⁰ “As you approach a town to attack it, you must first offer its people terms for peace. ¹¹ If they accept your terms and open the gates to you, then all the people inside will serve you in forced labor. ¹² But if they refuse to make peace and prepare to fight, you must attack the town. ¹³ When the LORD your God hands the town over to you, use your swords to kill every man in the town. ¹⁴ But you may keep for yourselves all the women, children, livestock, and other plunder. You may enjoy the plunder from your enemies that the LORD your God has given you.



¹⁵ “But these instructions apply only to distant towns, not to the towns of the nations in the land you will enter.”

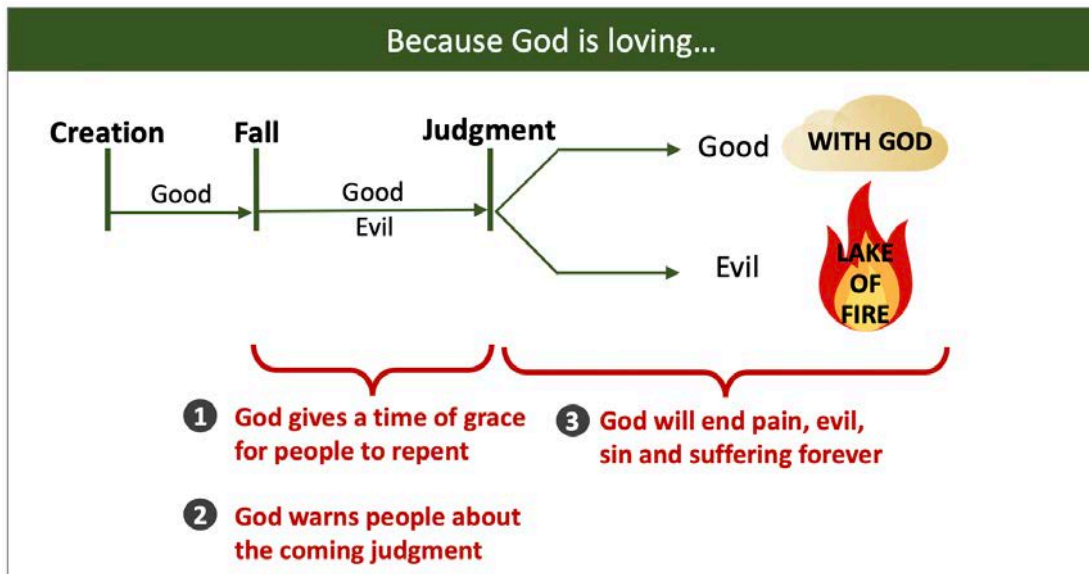
The holy war is a special category which is a picture of the principles of judgment that God will use at the final judgment. It is God's objective to remove evil from the land and from the world. God is loving. He wants all to be saved. But He also warns us about the future.

2 Peter 3:7–9

⁷ And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

⁸ But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. ⁹ The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Let us not misunderstand God. It is precisely because Yahweh is loving, merciful and gracious that He acts in this way.



It is up to us how we will use this time of grace and respond to these warnings.

A warning picture of the Final Judgment

While God used the Israelites to destroy the evil nations, it is important to note that it was not because the Israelites were good. Rather, it was because of how wicked the other people were. This is what God said to the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 9:5

It is not because you are so good or have such integrity that you are about to occupy their land. The LORD your God will drive these nations out ahead of you only because of their wickedness, and to fulfill the oath he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God is holy. He hates evil and sin. And He is right to hate sin and evil. When sin reaches the fullest amount with no chance of change, God will unleash His anger and punishment and destroy sin and the sinner.



God's people are in a Father-son relationship with Him. They are called to be a reflection of His nature, goodness, kindness, lovingness, etc. If God's people are to reflect God and model their behaviour after Him, then whatever God hates, they also must hate. This is right because sin and evil should be hated.

At the point of the Conquest, God put in place the ethical principles for the final or last judgment. He puts aside common grace or the ethical principles for peacetime. God calls His people to enact His judgment on sin and evil.

This holy war is a warning picture of the final judgment.

Note that Israel's holy war on Canaan is not the same as other pagan religious concepts of holy war. Others engage in holy war to gain their god's favour or salvation. Or they use holy war to force others to believe in their god. But Yahweh called for holy war for two reasons: to bring judgment on the Canaanites who were rebellious beyond the limits of His grace and to clear the land so Israel could start their counterculture society based on Yahweh's values.

Israel was not called to wipe out all peoples on earth or force others to faith in Yahweh. God's goal was to show the world His character and what a relationship with Him was like through His relationship with Israel. God's work for Israel was to draw other nations to Him. But to be successful as a counterculture, Israel had to be separated and uncorrupted where they lived. That was why holy war was needed during that time.

The Holy War was to be the work of God

God said that He would do all the work to ensure the Israelites possessed the land. They only needed to trust and obey Him. This is what God promised:

Exodus 23:20–28

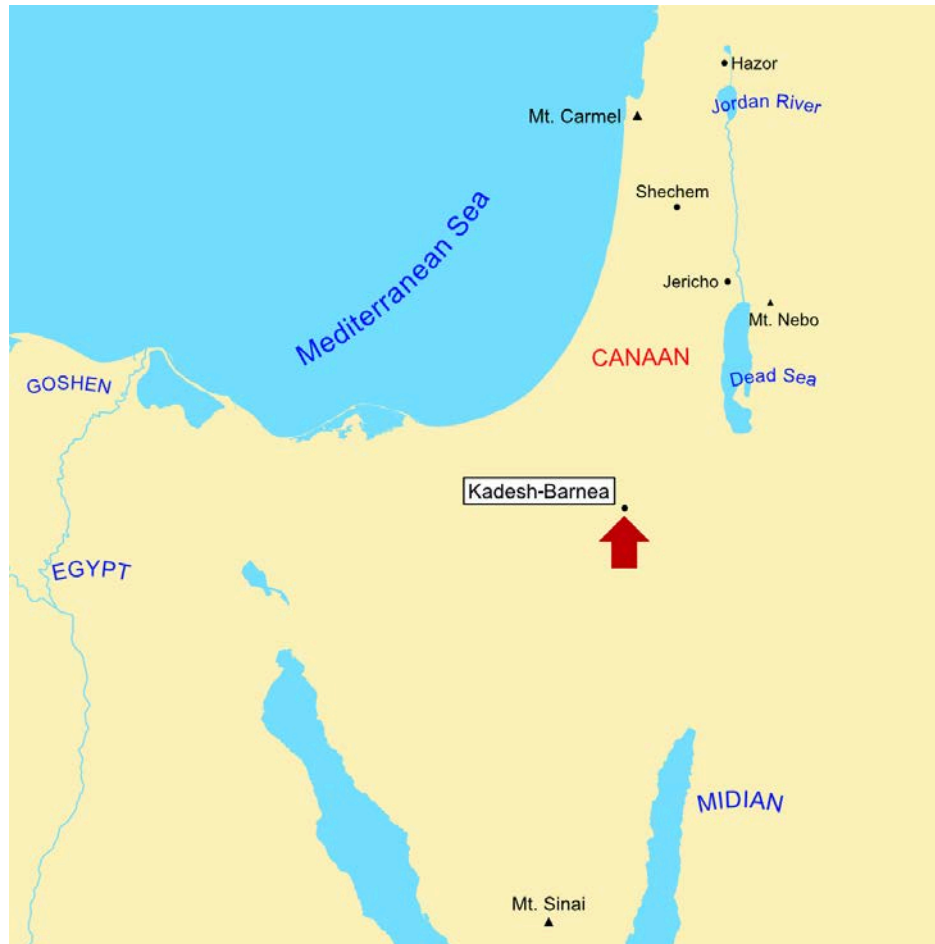
²⁰ "See, I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you. ²¹ Pay close attention to him, and obey his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he is my representative, and he will not forgive your rebellion. ²² But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you. ²³ For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, so you may live there. And I will destroy them completely. ²⁴ You must not worship the gods of these nations or serve them in any way or imitate their evil practices. Instead, you must utterly destroy them and smash their sacred pillars.



²⁵ "You must serve only the LORD your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. ²⁶ There will be no miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives.

²⁷ "I will send my terror ahead of you and create panic among all the people whose lands you invade. I will make all your enemies turn and run. ²⁸ I will send terror ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites.

The Israelites were to enter Canaan from the south at Kadesh-Barnea. God said the victory was theirs if they obeyed Him because He had already done all the preparation for their invasion: God had sent terror on the people.





As we saw, Rahab described how the Canaanites were frightened of the Israelites. God told Israel that He had already defeated the Canaanites psychologically or mentally! They would turn and run when the Israelites attacked. Victory would not be difficult!

God instructed Moses to send spies into Canaan to see what the land and the people were like. Moses chose one leader from every tribe, 12 men in total, and they spent 40 days spying out the land.

As God had promised, the land was good! It was flowing with milk and honey ("milk" meant that there was a lot of cattle which indicated that animals could multiply very well; "honey" meant there were plenty of fruit-bearing trees and the vegetation was lush). In fact, a single cluster of grapes was so big that it had to be carried on a pole by two people!



When the men returned, this is what the 12 reported:

	
<p>What 10 of the leaders said:</p>	<p>What Joshua and Caleb said:</p>
<p>Numbers 13:31a–33 ³¹ <u>"We can't</u> go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" ³² So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. ³³ <u>We even saw giants</u> there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them <u>we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!</u>"</p>	<p>Numbers 14:7a–9 ⁷ "The land we traveled through and explored is a <u>wonderful land!</u> ⁸ And if the LORD is pleased with us, <u>he will bring us safely</u> into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹ <u>Do not rebel</u> against the LORD, and <u>don't be afraid</u> of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the <u>LORD is with us!</u> Don't be afraid of them!"</p>
<p>SHOWED NO TRUST IN GOD</p>	<p>SHOWED TRUST IN GOD</p>

The 10 leaders lacked faith. They chose not to believe God's promise that He would give them the land. Instead they chose to believe their own subjective feelings of being as tiny as grasshoppers. Very quickly, they had forgotten what had happened at the Exodus where God led them out without an uprising, war or any loss of Israelite life, despite Pharaoh's army being huge and powerful!



On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb rightfully put their trust in Yahweh and they believed His promises. They also correctly understood that not going into the land was a sign of rebellion against Yahweh.



Unfortunately, the voices of the 10 leaders influenced the Israelites and they refused to enter.

God was so angry with their unbelief that He decided these rebels would never enter the land. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two leaders who trusted Him, would enter, together with all the children, who were the next generation.

This is what God said to the rebellious Israelites:

Numbers 14:29–38

²⁹ You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die.

³⁰ You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

³¹ “You said your children would be carried off as plunder. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised. ³² But as for you, you will drop dead in this wilderness.

³³ And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness. ³⁴ “Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. Then you will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy.” ³⁵ I, the LORD, have spoken! I will certainly do these things to every member of the community who has conspired against me. They will be destroyed here in this wilderness, and here they will die!”



³⁶ The ten men Moses had sent to explore the land—the ones who incited rebellion against the LORD with their bad report—³⁷ were struck dead with a plague before the LORD. ³⁸ Of the twelve who had explored the land, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

Hebrews 3:18–19

¹⁸ And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn't it the people who disobeyed him? ¹⁹ So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.

When the Israelites realised that they had angered Yahweh, they decided to invade.

Numbers 14:39–45

³⁹ When Moses reported the LORD's words to all the Israelites, the people were filled with grief. ⁴⁰ Then they got up early the next morning and went to the top of the range of hills. “Let's go,” they said. “We realize that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land the LORD has promised us.”

⁴¹ But Moses said, “Why are you now disobeying the LORD's orders to return to the wilderness? It won't work. ⁴² Do not go up into the land now. You will only be crushed by your enemies because the LORD is not with you. ⁴³ When you face the Amalekites and Canaanites in battle, you will be slaughtered. The LORD will abandon you because you have abandoned the LORD.”

⁴⁴ But the people defiantly pushed ahead toward the hill country, even though neither Moses nor the Ark of the LORD's Covenant left the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in those hills came down and attacked them and chased them back as far as Hormah.

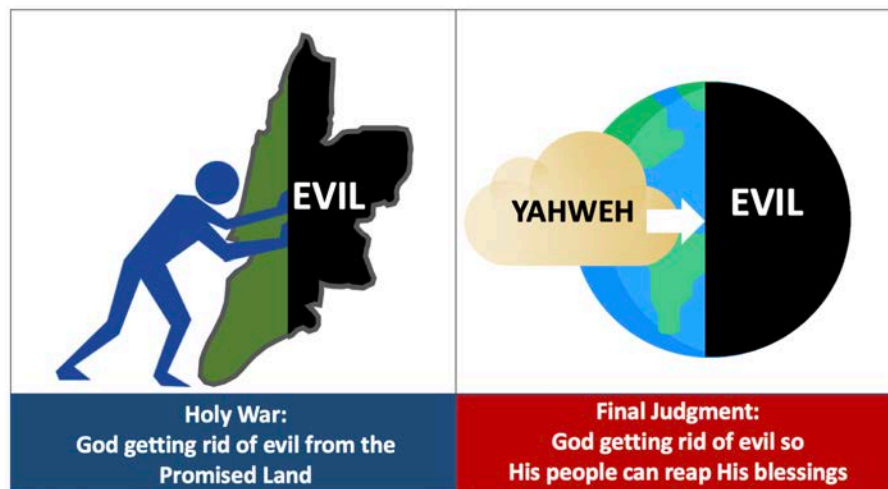
The people had such a complacent attitude: “We sinned, no problem. We’ll just do what God told us now. Better late than never!” But God had already changed His instructions to them because of their earlier rebellion. And once again, they disobeyed Him. They chose to do what they wanted rather than submit to God.

God had a lot of work to do, to teach His people about what it meant to have a relationship with Him. They would need to learn that God cannot be treated casually.

Eliminating Evil

The only way the Israelites could possess the land they owned was by eliminating evil. Through this incident at Kadesh-Barnea, Yahweh showed that holy war was necessary. The Israelites would only be able to possess God’s blessings of the Promised Land after good and evil had been separated and evil had been eliminated.

Similarly, at the final judgment, only after God separates good and evil can His people reap the blessings of His promises.



However, God also requires His people here and now to actively and intentionally separate good and evil. The period of the Conquest taught the Israelites about spiritual life and what God required of them.

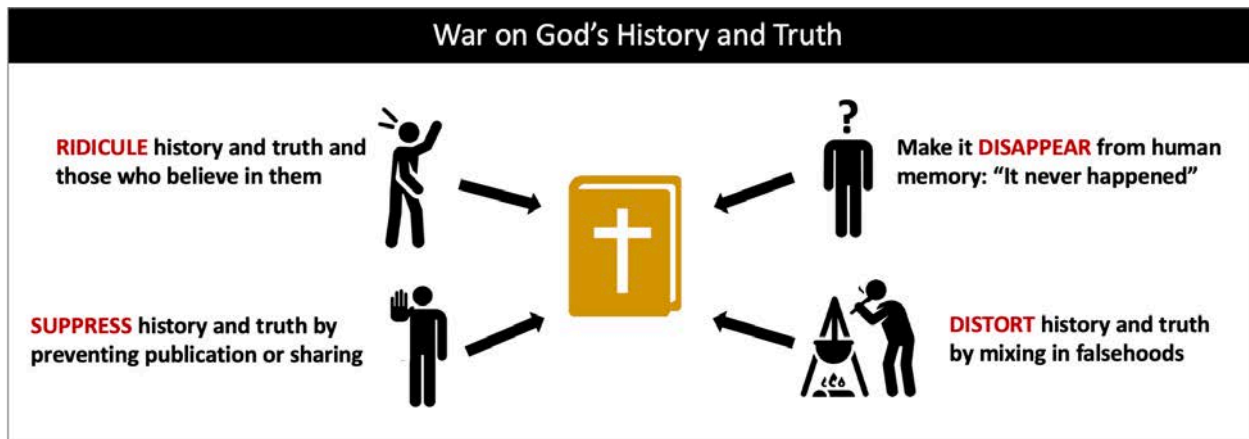
In the next few sessions, through Israel’s experience with Yahweh, we will learn important lessons for our spiritual walk as well.

Just as God required holy war for the Israelites to enjoy the land, we too will require holy war on our own hearts, separating the good and evil in us, in order to enjoy God’s blessings in this fallen world.



The War on God's History and Truth

God's plan from the very beginning was to enjoy a loving relationship with man. But mankind rebelled against His love and chose instead to be their own "god", determining their own truth. Satan too, made Yahweh his enemy and is bent on wrecking God's plans and destroying man. Today, both mankind and Satan continue to play a big role in the war against God's history and truth. This is what the war looks like:



Those who put their trust in Yahweh will continually be ambushed with accusations and ridiculed for what we believe. For instance, regarding the event of the Conquest, we might hear something like this, "I don't believe your God is loving at all. Your God is cruel, terrifying and barbaric. I would never want a God like that."

Will we crumble and leave our faith, believing the words that were said to us? Would we start to question God?

In order to combat and address similar statements, we really need to know God's history and truth well so our faith will not be shaken. This will help us defend against such attacks.

Let's go through the thought process of how to apply God's truth in a difficult situation.

We begin by stating what we know to be true:

- **God is all-good, all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-just and always faithful.**
- **He is sovereign and working out world history for His purposes and to His glory.**

Now, when we are faced with an accusation against God or the Bible that we cannot answer, we need to take the following steps:

1. Turn to the Bible and ask ourselves: **What does the Bible say about this?** Do we have any examples, historical accounts or events, or models that help us answer this question? Can we assemble the truth we have into a framework that gives a reasonable response to the accusation?



2. Also, **speak to a pastor or other trusted believers** and discuss the topic with them.
3. **Pray** for the Holy Spirit to lead us to the right answer as we consider all the truth we have assembled.
4. If after doing the above, we still don't understand why God is doing something, keep studying the Bible and keep praying. But also, **go back to the truths about God's character**. We know God is just and loving. Even if we don't understand why events are unfolding the way they are, we trust that He knows what He is doing. We trust that He is acting according to who He is and that He will not go against His own character. We remind ourselves that God is sovereign and in control and that He is working things out according to His perfect will.



The Bible says that we will not understand everything that God does because we are not God. The Creator-creature distinction means that we will not always understand everything that Yahweh does or how His perfect justice and love operate.

Romans 11:33–36

³³ Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! ³⁴ For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? ³⁵ And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? ³⁶ For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

Creator-Creature Distinction				
1 st level CREATOR (Yahweh)	All-knowing	All-wise	All-righteous	All-loving
2 nd level creature (man)	limited knowledge	limited wisdom	perverted sense of righteousness	Limited in love: self-centered

Abraham put his faith in God even when he did not know everything nor have all the answers. Based on God's track record that He left us, we actually know much more but still, we do not know everything about God.

Are we willing to trust in God's character and track record even when we sometimes do not understand His ways?

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. How does knowing that the Conquest is a picture of the final judgment affect your view and understanding of “the God of the Old Testament”?
2. Do you think that God’s punishment for the rebellious generation of Jews who refused to enter the Promised Land was appropriate? Why or why not? (Tip: Compare their response to Yahweh with Rahab’s and Ruth’s.)
3. God’s relationship with people is defined by covenants. Israel had the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Why do you think God works through legal contracts?



Pre-reading for next lesson:

- What happened at Kadesh-Barnea: Numbers 13–14
- What happened at Ai: Joshua 7–8
- What happened at Aijalon: Joshua 9:1–10:27
- The bad news at Bochim: Judges 1:27–2:23
- How this period of conquest and settlement ended: Judges 17–21
- Further optional reading: Books of Joshua and Judges