

## JOSHUA AND THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

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It is alleged that 'most scholars' agree that the book of Joshua holds little historic value. In our notes on the Pentateuch, we have dealt with the alleged denial of the existence of Adam and Eve, Noah's flood, the exodus from Egypt and now we have to contend with the allegation that Joshua did not fight the battle of Jericho. The atheist, Richard Dawkins, writes that the book of Joshua is a remarkable account of blood thirsty massacres but he often blames the God of the Bible, whom he does not believe in, for all the troubles of the world. An atheist who blames God who does not exist

There are some important facts. The list of geographical locations are proved to be correct. General Edmund Allenby's campaign to relieve Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917 was due to his following the Old Testament routes in the Biblical text since he had no maps. Scientists have proved the miraculous crossing of the River Jordan recorded in the book of Joshua which is now clearly evidenced.

The archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon, has written that the walls of Jericho did fall down and there was evidence of fire in the destroyed city just as the Bible relates. Some say it was an earthquake that did the damage, but that does not invalidate the Biblical account.

Canaan was evil. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 15.16. The Canaanites sacrificed their children in the fire, a practise that was carried out by pagans, Druids, Celts and others. It has been said that the destruction of Canaanites was not butchery but surgery.

One of the points is that the Bible criticises the Israelites for their misconduct. The people of God are not presented as faultless and wonderful. The Bible is both honest and frank. Even in the New Testament, the disciples are sometimes shown to be failures.

If I read the objections to the conquest of Canaan, it often seems to refer to be about historical dates but surely that is not essential when the events are real.

It all comes down to the obsession expressed as. 'Let us prove the Bible is wrong and show that all people who believe it are fools, and that we know better'. It all has to do with the hatred of the Jews and Christians, the Bible itself and God.

H.L Ellison states that the book of Joshua is considered to be about the conquest of Canaan but, in fact, the first twelve chapters primarily record the mighty acts of God during the conquest. In the book, attention is drawn to the account of two sins. One sin brought in a curse on all the people. It is so that in God's grace the penalty was paid by Achan and his family. The other sin was the pact with the Gibeonites of Canaan where the Israelites and their leaders were to blame and this was to be the outstanding sin during the period of the Judges writes Ellison even though the sparing of the Canaanites never seems to be an official action again.

Most of the rest of the book of Joshua contains the title deeds of each of the tribes of Israel. Whether the tribal portions were fully conquered and whether or not the authority of Israel was stretched to the boundaries set by God may be another matter, and where the people did not possess it all. this was a standing testimony to their sin and lack of faith.

Dr Scroggie said that there are not better Christians but there are more obedient ones. That Israel were not fully obedient caused them unnecessary trouble. In some denominations of Christian churches, there may not be total obedience nor a full acceptance of all the truth but, however, those who seek to embrace it are claimed to be exclusive, narrow minded and old fashioned.

The first six chapters of the book of Joshua deals with the Divine appointment of Joshua after the death of Moses and gives information of the extent of the Promised Land. God's promises to assist Joshua and he prepares to cross the river Jordan. We have the account of Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho, who hid the Israelite spies in Jericho, while the land was being assessed for the forthcoming invasion and the promise was made to her concerning her protection when an attack would be made. The report of the spies came to Joshua and the people.

There follows the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the twelve stones being laid in the river as a memorial. We read of how God magnifies Joshua for his faithfulness. It would do us all well to remember all of God's goodness to us but, alas, we do not and oftentimes neither did Israel.

By now the Canaanites were afraid, the circumcision requirement is renewed and the Passover is held at Gilead. The advance on Jericho is underway which city, we read, was 'shut up.' The people of Israel circled it for six days with the sound of trumpets and the walls came down and the city was destroyed. Rahab and her family were saved and a curse is put on anyone who may later attempt to rebuild Jericho. God keeps His promises and the victory is His doing.

Often victory is hindered by a later event and Achan took of he accursed thing, property of the enemies of Israel in the battle for Ai and the defeat suffered at the hands of the Amorites. Ai was defeated by Israel at the second attempt. Joshua is encouraged and blessings are pronounced.

Kings of nations in Canaan were now up in arms, fearful of the might of Israel and the inhabitants of Gibeon having heard of the progress and success of Joshua claimed to be both servants and allies of Israel and this was a ruse to protect themselves. It was a deception and soon found out but Israel had promised to help them and felt that they could not abandon them. Five kings warred against the city of Gibeon and Joshua rescued the city. The five kings were eventually hanged.

But now there is a matter subject to abuse by critics of the Bible. The sun and the moon stand still at the word of Joshua. Some have opined that the day and night seemed longer and that Biblical language is sometimes expressed in what is called the language of apparent appearance.

In much erroneous teaching we are told that Adam and Eve did not exist, nor did the Garden of Eden, that Noah's flood did not happen and neither did the Exodus and that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses did not exist either and, in addition, some insist that the human race was seeded by aliens who also built the pyramids.

Seven more kings and their kingdoms were defeated and yet even more kings were defeated at the waters of Merom in chapter 11 and the land of Canaan was subdued. The land was distributed and tribal borders established. The Canaanites were conquered and the tabernacle is set up at Shiloh.

Now Joshua is old and blesses the people and give warnings as to the need of faithfulness to God.

How must all Christians honour God and be faithful to Him in all things and never forget His goodness and mercy. He is God and deserves all our love and, in Christ, will bring us to our Promised Land, the eternal abode of the Most High.

Remind yourselves of what Christ has done.

He did it for me,  
He did it for me,  
A sinner as ever could be.  
Oh, How I love Him,  
Now that I see

He suffered,  
He died,  
And He did it for me.

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