

"God's Treasured Possession!"

The Book of Deuteronomy-

Old Israel and New Israel = The Church

Date: 3-19-17 Study: #20 Text: Chapter 20

Lesson 20 for us:

**"You shall not be afraid of them,
for the Lord your God is with you"**

A. THE TEXT:

(1) "When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for **the Lord your God** is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. (2) And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people (3) and shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, (4) for **the Lord your God** is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.'

(5) Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, 'Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. (6) And is there any man who has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. (7) And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.'

(8) And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.' (9) And when the officers have finished speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed at the head of the people.

(10) "When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. (11) And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. (12) But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. (13) And when **the Lord your God** gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, (14) but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which **the Lord your God** has given you.

(15) Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. (16) 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, (17) but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as **the Lord your God** has commanded, (18) that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against **the Lord your God**.

(19) "When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? (20) Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

B. Study Notes:

1. You shall not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is with you

(Ex 14:26-28; Jdgs 4:13-16; Num 14:9; 1 Sam 17:45; 2 Chr 13:12; 14:11; 32:8;



Ps 9:10; 20:7,8; 124:8; Prov 18:10; Is 41:10; Heb 11:32-34)

2. There were two classes of exemption from military service:
 - a. humanitarian situations and b. unsuitability for service
3. The subjugation of the populace into forced labor was a fulfillment of Noah's curse on the sons of Ham, which were the people in Canaan (**Gen 9:18-28**). Offering terms of peace with the distant cities who surrender meant they became vassals of Israel. This was a common practice in the ancient world.
4. The abominations of the pagan nations had to be removed from the Hittites to the Jebusites (**Gen 10:6,15-18; 13:7; Ex 10:7; 23:31-33; 34:16; Num 21:2,3; Josh 6:21; 10:1; 11:14**)
NOTE: These people groups were not morally neutral, but were evil. They worshipped idols, demons and false gods and engaged in all matter of immorality, debauchery and wickedness.
i.e. child sacrifice, temple prostitutes, orgies, drunkenness, homosexuality...
Israel was the one nation of all nations which worshipped the only true God, and from them would come the Messiah Jesus Christ. God knew that if they did not devote these other nations to complete destruction, they would corrupt the Israelites to fall away from the true God.
(See Lesson 3 of this study which had an explanation of "Divine Warfare.")
5. It was a wise rule to not destroy all the trees, because they could eat from their fruit for many generations. (**Josh 17:15; Jdgs 9:48**). But other trees could be used for siege works. God did not want a scorched earth policy.

Christ's Divine Warfare Achieves Victory and Salvation

The second and crucial point is that divine warfare is God's means for saving his chosen people. For the sake of OT Israel, God engaged in temporal and national warfare, while for the salvation of all believers of both Testaments, God won the spiritual war through the physical death of Jesus on the cross and his bodily resurrection. Without this divine warfare, mankind would have been doomed to eternity in hell, but God's warfare enabled Israel to inherit the promised land, and his victory on the cross has made all believers heirs of eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. . . .

The book of Joshua has striking historical records of the personal involvement of the LORD in the battles of Israel for the promised land. God told Israel that it was "not by [their] sword and not by [their] bow" that they were victorious over the Canaanites (Josh 24:12). The LORD himself must fight and achieve the victory for the benefit of his people, in keeping with the biblical doctrine of divine monergism (versus synergism) in salvation. . . .

Divine Warfare as God's Just Punishment on Human Sin

A third point is that justified warfare is God's means to punish evildoers and that such punishment is necessary to curb sin and maintain temporal order. God carries out such punishment not only for the good and stability of societies, but also so that his church can do its proper work of proclaiming the Gospel. A pacifist religion or philosophy actually contributes to violence and iniquity by failing to curtail evildoers—by death if necessary. God may be patient for long periods of time, justice may be delayed, and evildoers may evade their temporal due, but the final day of reckoning will come.

To comprehend the twofold meaning of the military conquest of Canaan by Israel in the book of Joshua, we need to bear in mind that the LORD is a God of Law and Gospel, judgment and salvation. He damns the impenitent to eternity in hell and justifies penitent believers, making them

C. LIFE APPLICATION:

- 1. What are the things or people or situations of which we are afraid?**
- 2. How is the Lord our God with us despite our fears?**

Divine Warfare

Satan and Man's Sin Started Warfare

Before the rebellion of Satan, war did not exist. . . . Humanity's conflict is first vertical, because reprobate man naturally hates the just and holy God, and then horizontal, between people, even between husband and wife (Gn 3:16), who are united as one flesh.

The first point that must be made, then, is that wars will continue to flare up between sinful human beings as long as they live in this fallen world, in which Satan is at work. The devil is the original murderer, and he continues to foster hatred and killing. Christ himself declared that there would continue to be wars and rumors of war, and that "it is necessary for this to happen" (Mt 24:6; similar are Mk 13:7; Lk 21:9). Only when he returns in glory to bring this world to its end and fully subjugate Satan will war cease.

Therefore every utopian religion or philosophy that has the goal of eliminating all earthly warfare is doomed to fail because it fails to reckon with the total depravity of human nature and the ongoing activity of Satan in this world.

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heirs of eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. Both of these actions are expressions of his character as the one holy and righteous God. . . .

The Church's Warfare Is Spiritual

We see the long history of divine warfare culminate at the cross in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, who atoned vicariously for the sin and rebellion of the whole world. As he lay dead in the tomb, he appeared vanquished by the devil, who had entered his betrayer, Judas. But on earth's gladdest day, he rose as the victor, having conquered sin, Satan, and death. Paradoxically, the instrument of his death was his instrument of conquest: "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col 2:15). He is the stronger man who has disarmed the strong man—the devil—and plundered the devil's palace (Lk 11:22) by freeing those the devil had kept in bondage. . . .

Through the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments, lost sinners are transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. This transfer took place through OT Israel too, as in the cases of the former prostitute Rahab and her family (Josh 6:22–25) and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), who were spared, incorporated into God's Israel, and justified before God (Heb 11:31 and James 2:25 affirm this about Rahab). The Gibeonites even became sanctuary servants, cutting wood and drawing water for "the house of my [Joshua's] God" and "for the altar of the LORD" (Josh 9:23, 27).

The Christian Gospel in Word and Sacrament rescues the perishing from eternal destruction and fortifies them to do battle against the forces of evil within (the sinful flesh) and without (the devil and the world) that assail them. It is necessary for Christians to oppose detestable practices such as idolatry, sexual immorality, homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, and occult practices, which correspond to the ancient abominations of the Canaanites. The church rightly prohibits God's people from engaging in such practices. The church also rightly endeavors to persuade society at large to prohibit such evils, and to do so Christians work peacefully through lawful means, not by violence. . . .

A Christian View of Warfare Must Distinguish Law from Gospel

The church and individual Christians must carefully distinguish Law and Gospel in order to follow and implement what God's Word says about warfare. Physical warfare may be a justified use of force according to God's Law, since God uses nations, armies, and society's laws to punish evil and protect the common welfare. However, earthly warfare cannot bring about God's kingdom of grace, which comes only through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. In the OT too, it was not Israel's warfare, but faith in God's acts of salvation in fulfillment of his Word that caused Rahab and the Gibeonites to be saved.

Adolph L. Harstad, *Joshua*, CC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 256–66. See also, "devote to destruction," p 6.