

# Our God is a God of Judgment

Joshua 10:28-43

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, August 20th 2023

## I. The Problem explained (v. 28,30,32,40,42)

One of the differences you will find between the children's literature of today and the children's literature of the Puritan era is that the Puritans were not afraid to talk in great detail about death, suffering, Satan, spiritual warfare, hell, and God's judgments in passages such as this. Some of their drawings are actually pretty gory.

But the point is that they considered the judgments of God to be essential theology for children. And if Christians today are to have a virile Christianity, it is absolutely imperative that they see God not only as a tender bridegroom - He is that, but also as a mighty warrior; as a God of judgment. Last week we barely touched on the significance of God's judgments, and spent most of our time applying verses 16-27 to our fight against sin. I think that was a legitimate application. But today I want to tackle head-on the issue that so many Christians struggle with. And you don't have to go very far in this passage to discover what that is.

In some people's minds, the very first sentence of verse 28 is bad enough. But look at the second sentence: "He utterly destroyed them — all the people who were in it. He let none remain." The last phrase is sometimes translated, "He left no survivors." That phrase occurs six times in this passage. He left no survivors in any of the cities that he attacked. It's almost as if God doesn't want us to forget it. He left no survivors. He left no survivors. He left no survivors.

And lest we think that it was only in the *army* that He left no survivors, he adds other phrases to highlight the judgments of God. Verse 30, second clause says, "he struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword." And he repeats that phrase, "all the people" six times. And it wasn't just the adults, or even just the humans. Verse 40 says, "he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded..."

But I think it is that *last* phrase that I just read which is *most* offensive to many people - "as the Lord God of Israel had commanded." People could just write this off as ancient barbaric practices which God has saved us from if it wasn't for that phrase. Actually some commentaries try to justify it by saying, "Well, it was the common custom of that day to kill everyone." Forget that. It had nothing to do with custom. This was the command of God. And God reinforces over and over again that *He* wanted this judgment; *He* commanded this judgment; *He* was the author and finisher of this judgment. You can't put the blame on sinful man. *God* is clearly implicated. This passage tells us something about *God's* character. It's actually a picture of His final judgment. He is a holy God who has holy wrath against all sin. And the sooner we come to grips with that, the better off we will be. The astonishing

thing is not that God judges, but that God saves so many. Verse 30 makes clear that *God* moved the people in their slaughter. It says,

And the LORD also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he [What's the nearest antecedent of "he"? There could be debate, but grammatically it would seem to refer to the Lord. But whether the Lord or Joshua, this verse is also repugnant to modern man - he] struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Verse 32: "And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel..." Verse 42: "All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel." It is clear that *God* called for such judgment, and to be embarrassed by the judgment is to be ashamed of who God is. We need to have that clear in our minds - to be embarrassed by the judgment is to be ashamed of who God is. And Matthew tells us that if we are ashamed of God, He will be ashamed of us on the final judgment day. This passage tells us something about God Himself. And if you want to love and serve God, you can't make an imaginary god in your mind or you are breaking the second commandment. It's passages like this one that weed the chaff from the wheat; the fake believers from the true believers.

The God of Joshua is the same, yesterday today and forever, and His bride is for sure not going to be able to change who He is. Our God is not only a tender bridegroom, but He is also the protector of His bride. He is a strong warrior husband. And as we become accustomed to that, it *will* give us comfort. He promises that He *will* destroy those who destroy the bride.

## II. Why This Is Seen as a Problem

But some people don't object to *God* destroying the people. What *they* object to is *humans* being involved. So let's take a look at four possible objections or four possible misunderstandings that have caused people to be troubled over passages like this.

### A. We have a misunderstanding of the sixth commandment

Here's the first misconception: Some think that this is a violation of the sixth commandment. And part of that misconception flows out of an unclear translation of that commandment in the King James Version of 1611. It says, "Thou shalt not kill." I've had Hari Krishnas tell me that the sixth commandment means that you couldn't eat a Big Mac because that would implicate you in killing cows. It might be a good idea to go easy on the Big Macs for *other* reasons, but certainly not because killing is involved. The Hebrew word is a very specific word which means "to murder," and most modern versions translate it as "You shall not murder."

But even there, some have actually defined what was done here as murder. Now, it *would* be murder for America to engage in this kind of warfare - because God has not authorized us to fight this way, and He did not authorize Israel to fight this way in later wars. We will

get to that in a bit. But for now it is important to see that what was going on here was not murder. Here is the proper definition of murder. "To murder is to kill on purpose, unjustly, with malice, and without authorization from God." It has four parts to the definition. It is "... to kill on purpose, unjustly, with malice, without authorization from God." A car accident is not usually murder since it was not done on purpose or with malice. Defending your family from a nighttime intruder by killing him is not murder according to Exodus 20. When a doctor knows there is a 50-50 chance that an operation on a dying man may hasten his death, but it may also save his life, he has to make a judgment call. If the operation is not successful, that is not murder. Capital punishment does not have to be murder. Sometimes it is. But Scripture commands the execution of murderers and orders capital punishment in certain other crimes as well. Now there are a lot of capital punishments around the world that *are* murderous. Abortion is murder. That's a kind of capital punishment. Northern Sudan's killing of Christians is murder. So it is astounding to me that America could criticize God for this war when they have a love affair with abortion and have blood stained hands. America is guilty of murder on a grand scale.

But, if *God* commands a killing in a given instance, then it is just. By definition it is just. God is the very definition of justice. By definition this *cannot* be murder since God commanded it as a punishment. And even though the holy wars were unique in Israel's history (never again to be repeated - they were types or symbols), and even though under ordinary circumstances, if God had not commanded this, it would be murder to kill all the men, women and children in a town, since God had judged these people in His court, and had commanded men to be the executioners, it was not murder.

I want you to turn to Psalm 58, and we will read a Psalm which describes what the attitude of the righteous magistrate ought to be when he has been specifically commanded to use the sword against evil doers. When he sees pornographers who torture, rape and then snuff out little lives, it ought to fill the magistrate with holy wrath in defense of those children, and when justice is brought, this Psalm says that he ought to rejoice in the judgment. But he starts by saying many magistrates do not. Let's start by reading the title, since it is part of the inspired text.

Psa. 58:0 To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David.

Magistrates are put in place because criminals destroy society and destroy lives. But how do magistrates stop such destruction? It is by destroying the destroyers. If magistrates do not destroy capital criminals, then their lack of justice destroys the nation. And David calls the tune, "Do Not Destroy" because the injustice of the land *was indeed* very destructive. Destruction is unavoidable when criminals abound. A magistrate either destroys the criminals or the criminals destroy society. By failing to deal with criminals, this title indicates that the magistrates were to blame for the destruction. Verse 1:

Psa. 58:1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?

This silence against iniquity was a wicked silence. Verse 2:

Psa. 58:2 No, in heart you work wickedness; You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth. Psa. 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Psa. 58:4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; They are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, Psa. 58:5 Which will not heed the voice of charmers, Charming ever so skillfully. Psa. 58:6 Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! Psa. 58:7 Let them flow away as waters which run continually; When he bends his bow, Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces. Psa. 58:8 Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes, Like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Psa. 58:9 Before your pots can feel the burning thorns, He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, As in His living and burning wrath. Psa. 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Psa. 58:11 So that men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth."

This Psalm indicates that the failure to have proper capital punishment in the land causes people to think that God is not a God of judgment. There are serious ramifications for failing to have godly Biblical civics.

On the other hand, this Psalm says that when the *righteous* magistrate and *righteous* executioners throw stones at the criminal and get splattered, they still rejoice that God's justice is done. And a failure to rejoice is just a reflection of how unrighteous *we* really are.

So let's apply what I just said to this war. Since this holy war was a judgment of Almighty God, and since He called for it, it is not murder. By definition it cannot be. It was an act of justice. They were simply the executioners of the heavenly court where judgment had been given. In later history, Israel wasn't allowed to engage in this kind of warfare. *Human* courts can't execute children like they did. Why? Because of limited jurisdiction and limited knowledge, humans have to have limited judgment and checks and balances in court procedure that keep them from reading hearts. *God* can read the hearts of all the people being killed here, and He is not unjust in killing sinners. After all, He will inflict the second death, known as hell, on all who reject His grace.

And by the way, we will see in chapter 11, verse 19, that there was always the opportunity for Canaanites to repent and sue for peace. None besides Gibeon did. But they had the opportunity. But in any case, in human courts, humans are not allowed to read hearts when it comes to justice. Biblical court procedure protected criminals by giving a fair trial. That was not needed here because *God had already judged them as being worthy of death in His perfect courtroom.*

### **B. We have a misunderstanding about the goodness of man (cf. Jer. 17:9; Gen. 5:6-8; John 3:19; Rom. 3:9f)**

A second misunderstanding that we frequently have is about the so-called goodness of man. How many times have you heard people say, "I believe people are basically good?" Many people believe this. And if it is true that men are basically good, then it makes sense to be upset about a holocaust like this. One farmer tried to explain to my dad why he could

not believe in hell. He said, "I wouldn't even throw a cat into hell, and God is much better than I am." Well, if he really believed that God was much better than him, he would understand why there must be a hell for wicked sinners. But he didn't.

Let's describe what Scripture means when it says that the cup of iniquity of the Canaanites had become full. That's not an empty expression. Think of the worst child porn out there. The Canaanites were involved in practices such as these. Think of children being sold as sex slaves in their temples. Think of torture being part of sexual gratification. Think of the god Molech. Molech was a hollow metal god with a bull's head, outstretched arms and a fire making the idol red hot. Babies were placed on the red-hot arms of this god to be roasted alive. Think of the Indiana Jones movie Temple of Doom, and you have a little taste of what it was like in Canaan. The practices of Canaan were bad enough that I suspect I would have rejoiced in this judgment. (By the way, I regretted watching that Temple of Doom movie; I'm not recommending it - but it is such a vivid picture of Canaanite society.)

But God would still have been just in executing them all even if they were as good as Americans are. Think of hell. It is a torture chamber designed to torment people for eternity. And why eternity? Because they are continually adding blasphemous sins on top of the sins that they are being punished for, and so there is no end. Scripture says that every man, woman and child is so deeply sinful in God's sight, that God says they deserve hell. I have Facebook friends who absolutely deny the reality of hell. It doesn't make sense to them. And I will admit that hell doesn't make sense to me either. In part that is because I am a sinner. But do I believe it? Yes. I have no choice. God has revealed that doctrine to us in the Bible. Our problem is that we think we are much better than we are, and we think our neighbors are much better than they are.

I mean, no one can even keep the ten commandments. People don't love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. And failure to do so is breaking the first commandment right off the bat. We break the second commandment any time something we own becomes more important than God. Money can be an idol. When we don't tithe, we have committed idolatry because we are clinging to something that God has called for. Scripture says that our children can be idols. Sleep, food, sex can all be idols. As you go down through the ten commandments you find that all men break them. They break the Sabbath, disobey their parents and other authorities, covet, steal from God in many ways. They become bitter, envious, slanderers. The truth is that we are *not* basically good people. That is a myth.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Genesis 5:6-8 says, "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." John 3:19 says, "and this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." That was *Christ's* assessment of the situation in *His* day.

Paul says in Romans 3:9: "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all." That's astounding. He asks if we are better than pagans, and he says, "Not at all." And then he gives God's perspective of the sickening ooze that he sees flowing from our hearts in these words: "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit, the

poison of asps is under their lips...” Earlier he said, “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable.” Unprofitable. That is God’s evaluation of the state of man. We weren’t saved because of any goodness in us. It is simply because of the gift of righteousness that Jesus gives to all who put their faith in Him. He alone is righteous.

So from that vantage point, we all deserve God’s judgment. And Jesus bore God’s judgment in our place because God is a God who cannot let sin go unpunished. And Scripture indicates that because of their sinfulness, these Canaanites actually got a far worse judgment than being executed by the Jews. They are still burning under God’s judgment.

### C. We have a misunderstanding about the tolerance level of God

And that brings up a third misconception. It is a misconception about the tolerance level of God. We live in a generation that has created its own idea of God out of thin air. The God of American imaginations is a god who tolerates anything that we do and still loves us and blesses us and serves our every want and whim. When you think about it, the Evangelical God of today is basically our slave. Well, that’s not the God of the Bible. Most Americans probably still claim that they believe in the same God that is in the Bible, but they don’t. They have recreated Him into a tame, safe God who forgives everyone no matter what, and who tolerates any sins they may commit. What is *your* conception of God? Does *your* God sweep your sins under the carpet with no care in the world that you are sinning? Then your god is a figment of your imagination. He is not real.

What is the real God like? He is described in the book of Joshua. Yes, He is a God who can be tender and gentle and loving. But He is also a God who kills off entire nations because He is fed up with their iniquity. He is a God who takes Christians out because they have continued to rebel against His Word. You study the sin unto death in 1 John and you will see that Christians can be put to death by God because of their rebellion. Study out the judgments of God against true believers in 1 Corinthians 11 and you will see that the God of the Bible is not the same God of the Precious Moments Bible. He is an awesome God that you would fall down before whether in love or in fear.

### D. They fail to see in Gilgal the place of antithesis (The church has ceased to be an antithesis.)

But I think the main reason why people stumble over passages like this is because the church does not look much different than the world. These Israelites were different. They were radically sold out to God. And you can see why. Verse 43 speaks of their going back once more to Gilgal. It says, “Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.” If you remember from previous sermons, Gilgal was the place where the law of God was written in bold letters all over the stones of the mountain. It was the place of sacrifices, worship, and covenant vows. It was the place that spoke of utter antithesis between the church and the world. And that antithesis is missing today. Christians think, talk, act, and dress like the world.

It's no wonder that Christians have trouble in agreeing with God's judgments. They look too much like the very ones whom God is judging. The more of an antithesis there is between the church and the world, the more we will value God's judgments. The closer we get to the spotlight of God's holiness, the more we will see our own sin. Holy people are far more sensitive to their own sinfulness than self-righteous people. Holy people are humbled into an awareness of how much they need Jesus and how much they love Jesus for what He has saved them from. We need a holy church in America.

### III. When God Judges On Judgment Day

#### A. There will be none who escape; all who breath will be judged by the LORD (vv. 30,32,33,35,37,39,40)

Let's quickly finish by applying this passage to the final judgment day. The typology of the passage can (I think) be applied to the final day of judgment. Just as no one escaped judgment in these cities, no one outside of the true Israel will escape judgment on judgment day. All who breath will come under judgment. If you have not already made peace with God today, you may be the one under God's judgment on that day.

#### B. There will be no one who can deliver from God's hands (v. 33). Instead, the Lord will deliver them up. (vv. 30,32)

Second, there will be no one who can deliver them from God's hands. Verse 33 shows the futile attempt of king Horam of Gezer to rescue those in Lachish. But no one could deliver.

#### C. This will be a judgment of God (vv. 30,32)

Third, the final judgment will be a judgment by God. Yes, angels will be involved. And it appears that the saints of heaven will in some way be involved. But let's look at this type before we look at the antitype. Verse 30 says, "*the Lord* also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel." Verse 32 says, "And *the LORD* delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel..." Judgment day will be a day where all will pass before the throne of God and have judgment passed upon them by His omniscient mind. Not a single fact will escape His notice. Jesus said that we will be brought into judgment for every idle thought and word. Because God is omniscient, He can do that.

#### D. Jesus will be the judge just as Joshua is here (vv. 28, 29,31,33,34,35,36,38,39,40,41,42,43)

But beside the throne of God, there will be the throne of the Lord Jesus. Notice in this picture of final judgment that God judged *through* Joshua, who is a type of Jesus. In thirteen verses it says that *Joshua* slew the people; *Joshua* put them to the edge of the sword; *Joshua* fought against the people; *Joshua* took the city; *Joshua* conquered all the land; etc. And on judgment day, the greater Joshua, Jesus is said to be the one who will pass judgment. Don't think of Jesus as being sweet while the Father is tough. God the Son and God the Father will be united in their judgment. The description of Jesus in Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Revelation and

other passages is of a mighty warrior who strikes terror into the hearts of the people. John fell before him like a dead man, and only God's grace revived him. Revelation 1:17 says,

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last"

Yes, Jesus is still a tender and compassionate King, but He is also filled with splendor and power in judgment.

**E. We will be part of that judgment on the wicked (v. 29,30, 31,32,34,36,38,39,43) and on that day, we will rejoice in that judgment because the antithesis of Gilgal will have been made complete.**

Fourth, the fact that *we* will be involved in judgment is also pictured. One phrase that occurs over and over in this section is that Joshua "*and all Israel with him*" engaged in this slaughter. The wicked were delivered into *Israel's* hand. And on judgment day the same will be true with the greater Joshua. 1 Corinthians 6:2 says, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" Do you find that astounding? In my Revelation series I showed how every non-elect human will be resurrected on the last day and will engage in one last battle with the just-resurrected elect. And God will judge them, Jesus will judge them, and the saints will judge them.

Right now you might have a hard time agreeing with God's judgments, but when you are glorified in heaven you will be made to perfectly conform to Christ's character - a character that not only perfectly manifests love and mercy but also perfectly manifests judgment and wrath. And since we will be fully glorified and fully righteous, we will on that day be able to rejoice in these holy judgments. But only because we were spared by trusting in Jesus. Have you trusted in Jesus? He is your only hope of salvation.

**F. All the world will be inherited by the saints in a new heavens and a new earth (v. 40 with Rom. 4)**

I will end with one more observation. Verse 40 shows the final result of this judgment. It wasn't just people, but the land itself which was in view. Verse 40 says, "So Joshua conquered all the land; the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes..." And that is the ultimate end of all things, that the meek shall inherit the earth. Romans 4:13 says that this inheriting of Canaan was a typological down-payment of our inheriting the whole of planet earth. After all, Abraham didn't get anything in Canaan except a burial spot. Yet he was promised it all. When is *he* going to inherit Canaan? It hasn't happened yet. This is a good question for Full Preterists: when did Abraham inherit the promise of getting the land of Canaan? If he doesn't inherit the world in the future, then God's promises to Abraham have become null and void. Hebrews 11:39-40 says,

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.



The only way the promise that Abraham would inherit Canaan could be fulfilled is if Full Preterists are wrong and God ends history by ushering everyone into a restored *earth* - not just heaven, but into a restored earth. Canaan was just the down-payment, and if Abraham will eventually get the whole metaphorical house, he will not have missed anything by not getting the down-payment. He will get everything. And Abraham *must* get everything. Romans 4:13 speaks of “the promise that he would be the heir of the world...” That hasn’t happened yet - Abraham is an heir of heaven right now; he’s not on the earth.

The saints of old will not enter fully into that promise until the wicked are cast out of this world and this world is renewed according to promise. If God was not a God of judgment, there would be no guarantee of our entrance into the glories of the promise. So let’s not just rejoice in God’s *peace and favor* resting upon us, but *also* of His righteous judgments. It shows us His strength and power to protect the bride. It shows us His hatred of sin and that He is a God who will do something about it. It shows us that God is not content to let Satan inherit the earth. He plans to take over every square inch and cast the remaining demons out. The fact that God is a God of judgment makes Him a great God; an awesome God; a God before whom all will one day bow down. May He hasten that day. Amen.