

A Firmly Rooted Faith – Part II
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Joshua – Chronicles
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I'm going to ask you to turn with me in your Bibles, actually, to Genesis 12. We are going to be reading a passage there as a point of departure. It is introducing our message today. I felt like for the New Year, you get to do something a little different. We started last week, if you weren't with us then, on a new series that I believe will take one more week after today. The title of the series is 'A Firmly Rooted Faith', and the basic message that we are seeking to uncover and focus on is the fact that the true biblical Gospel, the message of salvation that we adhere to, that we as a church rally around, and celebrate, the message of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That this is the way a holy God has made sinners, who are unholy and unrighteous, has made them able to stand in His presence, forever in His land, by sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to die in our place. This message is the message of the whole Bible. It is not that God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. No, the God of the Old Testament *is* the God of the New Testament. We see this in Jesus' claims again, and again, and again, when He said, "I AM," in John's Gospel. He was calling the attention of the people that were around. "I am Yahweh. I am the God of the Old Testament."

So the message is one message and when we understand that it gives us a rooting, and it allows the roots of our faith to go deep so that we can stand against the storms and the winds. This week we had some really strong winds that blew through and our power was out the other night for about four and a half hours because a tree blew over somewhere and knocked the power out. Well trees fall over in winds when they are not rooted, or when there has been such rain that the root system is compromised, or when they are unhealthy, they fall over. But when a tree is rooted and strong, it can withstand the storms of time. Our faith is like that, our faith needs to be like that so that we are not blown about by every wind of doctrine, and we are not deceived quickly from the true Gospel.

One of the most encouraging things that we can see is that the message of the Bible is the same, and it is a message that God begins to unfold in the very early chapters of the Bible. Really Genesis 12, the message of redemption begins to unfold, and He teaches it progressively with greater and greater clarity. It becomes evident and supremely evident when Jesus Christ comes on the scene. This is the way of salvation, but it traces its way all the way back to the very first books of the Bible.

Now I would like just to continue to introduce our message this morning. We're going to be focusing today on the period of Joshua, we're going to focus on basically seven books of the Bible. Last week we covered five in one day. You know, we didn't cover the whole things obviously, but we touched on five books of the Bible in one day. Today I have the confidence, pray for me that I'm not being overconfident, we're going to shoot for seven today. Lord-willing, more next week because I want to finish the Old Testament next week. But seven, and what we are doing is we are following the basic, historical flow of the Old Testament. We looked at *The Pentateuch*, Genesis through Deuteronomy last week, and we're going to look at Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and the first nine chapters of 2 Chronicles. If you add that up that is six plus a half, plus a half, is seven.

What we do is we're covering a period of time from the time that Israel enters into the Promised Land, 1405 B.C., all the way up to 930 B.C. For those of you who like numbers, I like numbers, it helps me in my mind to have these things in my head. 1405 is the time when they entered the Promised Land. 930 is when the division of the Kingdom happens after Solomon's death. The United Kingdom of Israel is over and then you have the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. So we are going to stop at the death of Solomon, before the division of the kingdom. So Joshua leads them into the land. We are going to look at the conquests of the land and what that tells us about this unfolding drama of redemption. The period of the judges, remember the period of the judges, we're going to talk about that. Then the period of the united monarchy. Saul is king, and then David is king, and then Solomon is king. That is where we get the other books that I mentioned. We are also going to look at that wonderful story, we're going to conclude with that wonderful story of Ruth, even though it happened during the period of the judges, it was probably written after David, and probably after Solomon's death.

Now, we need to for a moment spend some time putting it in context again, especially for those of you who were not here last week, but for all of us it is so helpful to keep trying to put the biblical picture in context. We get in trouble when we interpret out of context, but when we see something in context we then really know what God is saying in that. So there is this larger context to Scripture, and let me just again hit the first five books quickly. Even more quickly.

Genesis 1-11, basically God creates, everything is good, man is in fellowship with God in the garden. Remember, walking with the Lord. God comes and walks with them in the cool of the day. Then man sins in Genesis 3 and the basic problem of the Bible then is: *How can sinners get back into Eden? How can paradise be*

regained? Paradise has been lost in Genesis 3, how can it be regained? In Genesis 4-11, basically we see the hopelessness of man apart from God. Chapter 4, Cain kills Abel. How bad is sin, essentially, is the question being asked. A brother kills a brother right off the bat. Genesis 5, Lamech, the descendent of Cain's, even worse a murderer than Cain. Chapter 6, the flood. God has to wipe out the whole world except for Moses, and his wife, and his three sons, and their wives, eight people, because of the wicked, evil nature of fallen man embracing evil.

Surely after that the world is clean. Now everything is going to be okay. No, shortly after that, Genesis 11, you have the Tower of Babel, this great rebellion against God, where man tries to make a name for himself, to seek his own glory, to make his own way to Heaven. The picture there is, look at the hopeless wickedness and the lostness of man. How utterly in the dark is man in sin? Then Genesis 12 opens the first page really of God's glorious plan of salvation, the covenant of grace. The way that God is going to save sinners. The way that God is going to bring sinners because the question that the Bible addresses is: *How can sinners be made right with God?* How can sinners who were created for God's presence, you and I were created to be in the presence of God, to see His glory, to be satisfied as nothing can satisfy with looking on the Lord's glory, how can we come back to that? How can glory be regained? How can sinners be made right with God, and Genesis 12, God comes down. Genesis 11, man was trying to go up. That doesn't work. God comes down and He chooses a man named Abram, that later becomes Abraham, and He begins to unfold His way of salvation.

What's happening here, remember we used the analogy, imagine being in the dark for a long time, and then suddenly you are exposed to light. This can happen sometimes when you are out to lunch or something, or you are in a mall around noon and you come out, and "Wow, it is so bright out here!" You've been inside away from natural light, and you come into the natural light again. There is this sense in which when you've been in the dark it takes a while for your eyes to get adjusted. So the Lord, in His revelation, is basically giving His truth about who He is in a way that is easy for us to assimilate. A metaphor we used, that Calvin used actually, is that God prattles with us, He baby-talks with us. He teaches things, basic truths, and then He adds more to them as we grow and develop. That is what we see happening. Scripture is progressively revealed. God is revealing His glory.

All of it is true, but at the beginning, it is very simple and elementary. Essentially, I want to pause it before you, I believe this bears up to the teaching of Scripture, is that essentially what God does, He says, "The way that you have to come back to Me, I'm going to illustrate for you. I'm going to illustrate before all the peoples of

the earth in My dealings with my people Israel.” He says in Exodus 19, “I make you a kingdom of priests. You are a kingdom that serves as priests.” A priest serves between a man and God, so they are a kingdom of priests. They are to be a kingdom of people who are between God and the rest of the world, to bring the rest of the world to God. How does this happen? It happens first through God’s dealings with Israel. There is this picture of salvation being put together right before the eyes of anyone who is attentive and watching.

We see this, first of all, in the passage that we are going to read for our point of departure this morning. I want us to read again Genesis 12. We actually didn’t read this last week, we talked through it, but I want to hit it again because this is foundational, and we need to look at this again. Read with me Verses 1-9 and what you are going to see here is you are going to see that this is the beginning of God’s covenant with Abraham. Essentially He says, “The way that you are going to come to live in My presence, the way you are going to come again into My land, and live with Me in My presence, is I’m going to have to enter into a relationship with you. You have to come to know Me, and when you come to know Me, I will make you fit to live in My land.”

In this covenant, there are three promises that are mentioned here in the first three verses of Chapter 12, that really serve as a picture of salvation, a type of salvation. I want to mention these to you and watch as we read and you’ll hear it again as we talk through the rest of the message. Essentially, God comes to Abram and says to him, “I’m going to make you a great nation.” The first is nation. “I’m going to give you a land.” The second is land. And the third is, “I’m going to bless and make you a blessing.” So it is nation, land, and blessing. You could put beside, maybe hyphenate blessing and put presence because what we see as it unfolds is what God means by blessing is, “I’m going to make it where, I can bless you where you can be in My presence.” So it is nation, land, and presence. God promises these things to Abram, and to his descendants. “I’m going to give you these things.” Nation, land, and blessing. Look with me at Genesis 12:1-9.

Genesis 12:1-3 ~

***Now the LORD said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation,***

*And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*

Do you see that last clause? *And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* God’s plan from the beginning was, through Abram, through Abraham and his people, the land of Israel, to bless all the families of the earth. Our musical last month, *Born to Redeem the Nations*, written by Ken Temple, and Connie, that was the message of the Gospel. Jesus was born to redeem the nations. God’s plan was always to extend salvation to every tribe and every people, but He did it through one nation, the Nation of Israel. Look at Verse 4.

Genesis 12:4-9 ~ So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. 8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we ask that in Your light we might see light. That You might grant, by Your Spirit, clarity of understanding, clarity of thought, and submission of heart to the glory of Your Son. We pray in His name, Amen.

Now, the three promises He gives to Abram here, the nation, the land, the blessing. You could say nation and seed are the same thing, or descendants, key words that appear over and over—nation, seeds, and descendants. The question is: *How can people become part of God's family again?* "I'm going to make a nation of people who are Mine. I'm going to do this," God says. "You tried to come to Me. No, I'm going to do it. I've come down to make a covenant, and I'm going to make a nation of people from every nation that will be Mine. I'm going to make them dwell in My land, and they are going to be in My presence." And how is this going to happen? That is the unfolding process of redemption. But He starts off, this is basically the baby-talking right there. What we need is we need to be made again, God's people. We need desperately to dwell in God's land, and in His presence. How can that happen? That is God prattling with us.

Now, what we see, and let me just provide a little bit of biblical background and support for this because you need to understand this process biblically. The land is clearly a type of dwelling in God's presence. It's in Hebrews 11:8-10 and 13:16. In Hebrews 11, the author of Hebrews basically says, "Listen, the reason Abraham, when he was called to go to a land which God was going to show him, and he went, and he lived in the land. He never received the promises. Then Isaac never received the promises. Never received the land as their possession. But God said, 'It is your land.'" They didn't receive it. Remember I mentioned last time, 685 years from the time Abraham received the promise until he possessed the land. Six hundred and eighty-five years. Why was that?

The author of Hebrews says so that they could learn that it wasn't about the land of Canaan, it was about God's land, the city whose builder and maker is God. That is a heavenly country, it's what they were to desire, and because they desired a heavenly country, God is not ashamed to be called their God. They got the message that Canaan isn't it. "The reason that you don't possess Canaan is I want you to learn from the very beginning that Canaan is just a type of Heaven." Then the whole idea of faith. Let me show you another example of this. In Hebrews 3:13 and following, what you have is the author of Hebrews again, I mentioned last time that Numbers is when they are getting ready to cross into the land. Remember? And they don't cross in because of unbelief. They don't believe God can deliver them into the land. Here again is a type of salvation because the author of Hebrews in 3:13, after he says, he is talking to potential believers and believers there in the 1st Century, and he says, "Be careful that a sinful, unbelieving heart doesn't grow up in you." He then says, "Don't be like the Nation of Israel who hardened their hearts and did not enter the land." He says they didn't enter the land through unbelief, so that he is basically making a type again that believing God is entering

the land. You see? So this is a well-established foundation biblically. This is how God is teaching salvation. Now we saw that God works through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to show them that the relationship of covenant, of what it is all about, remember the story? Genesis 15, it is by faith. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. It is by grace, the Lord grants him salvation. The Lord takes the curse of the covenant upon Himself.

Then we ask the question about the Exodus. *Why is it that God allowed His people to become enslaved for 400 years?* He didn't have to do that and what we saw was that the reason God did that is, here again, He is prattling with us. He is showing us how is it that you and I can come to dwell in His land. We must be delivered from the domain of darkness. That is why. It wasn't accidental, it was purposeful. They were enslaved so that God could deliver them, to show them, "If you are ever going to dwell in My land, you have to first be delivered from darkness." The question then becomes, and this is something that we didn't talk about last week, after they come out of the land God does the miraculous miracles, the Passover. One of the first things He does is gives them His law. He reiterates the law in Deuteronomy, but in the part of giving the law He also, remember, He dwells with them visibly for 40 years. Remember the Lord appears to them when they leave Egypt. He appears to them in a pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. God, in His plan, only intends to do this until they enter Canaan.

Here is another moment of prattling. He is teaching us something. The question He is teaching us is: *How can God's presence dwell among His people? How can God lead His people to dwell in His land, in His presence?* Of course we see that the reiterating of the law means you've got to be holy to dwell in God's land. You have to be perfectly righteous. If you are going to live in God's land, it is a much bigger deal than we think it is. To be saved is an amazing, the most amazing miracle that we can imagine. It's not a small thing. It is moving from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son. It is as great a miracle as creation, *ex nihilo*. That is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians when he says, "The God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness, let there be light,' has spoken that light into our souls." Salvation is a miracle like that.

So we see that He is teaching us that in the history of the Nation of Israel, and He's teaching them more. *What does it mean to be in covenant relationship with God?* It means that we walk in His ways. For us to dwell in His land we must keep His whole law. He gives them that in Exodus, *The Ten Commandments*. In Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law, and I mentioned last time, why is it that He gave the law a second time? Why didn't He just say, "Hey, before you go

into the land be sure and read what I gave you earlier. Read the law.” He gave them the law a second time and He reiterates it completely, Deuteronomy 5, a word-for-word repackaging of the law of God. He is doing that to reiterate and emphasize the fact that you must be holy to dwell in God’s land. You must be perfectly righteous. He is teaching us, what does it mean to come to dwell in the presence of a holy God? We have such a low view of sin. We have such a low view of God and such a high view of ourselves. We don’t think it is a big thing for us to enter into the presence of God.

I was watching a video the other day of Ray Comfort in his video on *God vs. Evolution*, which I commend to you. It is an excellent video. He talks to scientists who are evolutionists. You know, professors at UCLA and USC, and he is asking them questions. It really exposes the fact that evolution is a faith commitment. Watch the video if you have any doubts about that. *God vs. Evolution*. As he is talking with them, at one point later on, he is talking to all these different people, he asks them, they basically don’t believe in God, but then he says, “Are you going to Heaven?” Atheists even will say, “Yes.” I think it is interesting. Some of them will say, “I don’t believe in Heaven,” but then a few of them, “I’m an atheist.” “But are you going to Heaven?” “Yes.” It doesn’t make sense, but the thing that hits you though is that all of them were saying, “Yes, I believe I’m a pretty good person.” “Yes, I believe I’m a pretty good person.” “Yes, I believe I’m a pretty good person compared to other people. So I don’t need that much help from God. Getting to Heaven, if I believed in God, would just be a boost up. After all, He is just *‘the man upstairs’*. He’s not that much different than us.” We imagine Him, we make Him our own image, rather than realizing He made us in *His* image, but He is vastly, majestically above us.

So if God is that far above us, if He is that exalted in holiness, if He dwelt in light inaccessible, hid from our eyes, how can we ever hope to dwell in His presence? That is what the Lord is trying to teach you and me, who have a high view of self, a low view of sin, and a low view of God. He is trying to teach us how to have an exalted view of God, have a diminished view of self, have a great view of the weight of sin, how awful and terrible it is, and then you will see the glory of your Savior. That is what He is teaching in these early books of the Bible. In fact, the seeding sinfulness of sin is what comes into focus particularly in Joshua, and Judges, and Samuel. He’s trying to teach us just how great a miracle it is going to take to save us. He is doing it in the most wonderful way in pictures that arrest us, that when we look at them honestly are really disconcerting, discombobulating, even offensive. He offends our sensibilities, particularly in Joshua, but you’re going to see it in Judges also, but He doesn’t do it haphazardly, He does it

intentionally because he is trying to teach us something that hardheaded people like you and me, we needed a pop on the head.

One of the things that we're going to talk about in Joshua is the fact that he commands the Nation of Israel, when they enter into the land of Canaan, to kill everything that breathes in the land. They are to kill men, women, children, and animals. He puts things under the ban. Unbelievers look at this and they talk about the brutality of God, the Lord is commanding genocide. This is not genocide, this is part of a one-time event in redemptive history.

I was reading some commentaries on this and one of the commentators made this point. It is something that you are going to encounter. You may have already encountered it yourself. If you read through Joshua again, you are going to wrestle with it some, but particularly people around you from time to time will say something about this because it offends our sensibilities. Why would God do that? One of the commentators made this point. He said, "Isn't it interesting, the command to kill all of the people in Jericho, all of the people in Ai, all of the people in the various towns in Canaan, did not offend the sensibilities of Jesus? We have no record that Jesus or the apostles had any trouble at all understanding it." "Well, modern man, we are more sophisticated than they were." More sophisticated? Not then the Lord Jesus, and not then the apostles. They are more depraved maybe.

I mentioned coming out of the dark, I remember a couple of years ago, and I've mentioned this before in a sermon. It seems a good illustration. Remember those Chilean miners that were under the earth? Deep down in the bowels of the earth for like two months? They couldn't be rescued, the mine had collapsed and it took two months to get them out. When they brought them out, it was like a 12 or 13-minute process, I believe, if I recall correctly, to lift them up the distance by this conveyor system they had. They could bring one guy up at a time, through the shaft, and he came up, and it took like 12 or 15 minutes to get one person up. Then they would send back down the empty thing, but the cart that they were sending back down each time had a heavy coat, because on the surface in Chile at that time was very cold, and it also had very dark glasses to completely block out their eyes because scientists wondered, doctors wondered, "What will be the effect on the human eye to have not seen the light of the sun for more than two months, and suddenly see it?" They weren't sure they would be able to see again, and so they had these dark glasses on.

When they came out, can you imagine what that must have been like? That is a picture of what you and I are doing when we open the pages of the Bible. We have been completely in the dark about God. We have no idea who He is, how badly messed up we are. We come to this book and then when the light comes on, sometimes we want to do this, “I don’t like that.” What is the answer? Is it to condemn the light for being the light? There is nothing wrong with the light, the problem is with me and you. The problem is in the darkened understanding. Our mind has been darkened, our will has been darkened, our affections are darkened by sin. And if we saw things in context really of the plan of redemption, everything makes sense. I think that is what the commentator said. The reason that Jesus and the apostles didn’t have trouble, we didn’t have any record of them talking about this issue is, they saw it in context, the command to annihilate the nations in the land of Canaan.

Now think about that, in context. If you heard the statement, “A man killed 12 people.” That statement can be interpreted very differently depending on context. If you heard a man killed 12 people in a movie theater, or at a political rally, you would know it was a great act of evil. But if you learned about a man killing 12 people on the battlefield to save his fellow soldiers, that is an act of heroism that we celebrate. So it is with the reality, when we see what God is doing in that, it is something wonderful and right. It is sobering, yes, it is hard to look directly at, but when you find things that are hard to look at, the question is: *What do you really believe about this book? Is this the word of God or is it not?* If it is the word of God, you and I need to keep letting our eyes adjust. We may have to come squinting, and asking the Lord for help, but let our eyes adjust to see what He has to say, not what man, or what we have to say. We don’t judge Him, His word judges us.

Now, I think there are three ways we can put this whole thing about Joshua into context. The first is that when you put it into the right context, you need to put it into three different types of context. The first is moral and spiritual context. The second is legal and judicial context. The third is redemptive and historical context. There are three different types of context we need to see this in to understand this correctly.

Moral and Spiritual Context:

It’s interesting when you look back at Genesis 15, the next Chapter in Genesis that really focuses on the covenant, after the one we just read, when Abraham is told that his descendents are going to be like the stars of the heavens and he believes,

and it's credited to him as righteousness, after that, the Lord makes a covenant with Him passing through the pieces of the animals, remember? And the Lord says to him, "To your descendants I have given this land," and He names it the land of the Kenites and the Perizzites and all the different tribes of Canaan, but essentially in Verses 13 to 16, He says, "But because the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete, your descendants will dwell in a foreign land as slaves." The time's not right because the wickedness of the Amorite is not yet reached its full measure. Amorite is a word for all of the Canaanites. He's saying that essentially one of the reasons you're not going into the land right now is because the wickedness of those people has not reached its full measure.

Now, He says this in 2081, ten years after He called Abram in Genesis 12 (2091). Ten years later, in 2081, He has the encounter with Abram in Genesis 15. This means it's 675 years before Joshua. So God in His mercy allows the wicked Amorites 675 more years. Think about that. That's a pretty long time. 675 years. We also find out from a standpoint of moral and spiritual decay, when we look at Deuteronomy and when we look at Joshua itself as well, but Deuteronomy talks about the sins of the people in the land. There's all kinds of moral depravity. Moral perversion ran throughout the land, bestiality even, wickedness of such spiritual character, the love of darkness, the love of evil, that it was common among the tribes of Canaan to offer their sons and daughters in the fire, human sacrifice. So what they were coming into was basically they were stopping a group of people who were worse than the Nazis. That's the moral and spiritual context.

Legal and Judicial Context:

One of the things I think God's telling us, though, in that is that in reality, when the people of Canaan are killed by His people, that they are getting exactly what they deserve. The thing that Israel should have seen was they're also getting what *we* deserve. I mentioned Jesus in His sensitivity—remember the story in Luke 13 where He's told about the tragedy that happened, the accident that had happened? Actually, He's told about the murder of the Galileans in the temple. It was a tragedy for Israel. The Romans had gone into the temple chasing some zealots down, they crossed over into the part that no Gentile should go into, and then they cut down Jews from Galilee with their swords, so that the blood of the Jewish people was mingled with the blood of the sacrifices, and the Jews were indignant. And they come to Jesus with that report, assuming surely Jesus will be indignant, because He commanded it and the Gentiles can't cross into the temple itself.

They said, “Can you believe this happened?” and what Jesus says is the most astonishing thing that we can imagine. He says, “Do you suppose those Galileans were worse than other Galileans?” Can you imagine? They’re wanting to hear what His thoughts are about this. Everybody in the crowd wants to hear what Jesus has to say. The disciples want to hear what Jesus has to say, and He says, “Do you suppose those Galileans were worse than other Galileans? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you’ll all likewise perish.” He’s basically saying, “They got what they deserved, and the miracle is that you who are standing around Me,” Jesus says, “haven’t gotten what *you* deserved, and unless you repent, you will.”

And then to kind of take the knife and turn it a little more, He says, “Do you remember when the tower of Siloam fell and killed 18 people in Judea?” These were Judeans that died in an accident. “Do you suppose that those Judeans were worse than other Judeans? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you’ll all likewise perish.” That’s the blinding light of the Son coming right there, saying that God sees things radically different than you and me. R. C. Sproul says in a sermon I heard him preach on Luke 13 that we have a misplaced locus of indignation. That sounds like Sproul, doesn’t it? A locus of indignation. That is, we’re indignant about completely the wrong thing. We’re indignant that God would judge people in Canaan. What we ought to be indignant about is He hasn’t done it with all of us already.

If we could see sin the way He sees sin, if we had the ability, if we weren’t like moles—we’re like moles that live under the earth, that never see the light of day, and we want to come out and judge the God of the universe? What idiocy is that? The God of the universe says sin is a much bigger problem than you and I who are moles understand, and the amazing thing is that when Adam sinned, He didn’t just destroy the whole world in His wrath, but in His amazing kindness, He has put up with the evil that goes on day after day, week after week, year after year. Why? So that He can save some out of the fire. That’s what the Lord is doing, and in Joshua, the legal and judicial context is we all deserve what they got anyway, and the Jews should have been marveling at the grace. Why? What does it mean? The only people that are going to be saved from God’s righteous wrath—because what’s happening is the nation of Israel is an instrument of God’s wrath at that moment in time. It’ll never happen again like this. The only time it’ll be anything close like this is at the Second Coming. This is not a case for the way militaries are to battle with each other. Not at all, it was a onetime event when God is saying, “I’m using My people to visit My wrath upon a certain group of people to show that for you to enter into God’s land, God’s wrath must be radically revealed.” That’s what He’s saying.

How can you come into God's land? Imagine what it was like to be an Israelite. You're a man and you've got to go fight and you've got to go kill all those people. The Lord could have just nuked them, right? He didn't. He made them go in there and have to do that. Why? It's because He was showing them through up close and personal experience, this is how. They were getting to see the wickedness as they went in, the depravity, the awful wretchedness of those people, but still they had to kill. For us to enter into God's land, God's wrath must be poured out in an offensive way that offends our sensibilities. Sin is so great. The nature of evil is so bad that if God pulls back His hand, look what wretches we've become. When we understand that, then we marvel at the cross, because the cross is exactly the fulfillment of that kind of unveiling of His wrath, except this time God's wrath is revealed in a much more horrific way, because the wrath that was poured out at Calvary swallows up the wrath that was poured out in Canaan a million times over, because the wrath of God against sin that comes out upon His own dear Son is light years above what is poured out upon the Canaanites. And that's because God's wrath must be, His righteous hatred of sin, will not be denied.

God will not wink and let people into heaven. He will punish to the nth degree those who are evil, and the reality is if you and I are honest, if we can see for a moment, if we can adjust our eyes to the light, we all know that's good and right. It's even true, I find this, in the inconsistencies of the skeptics and unbelievers. You know, people who don't believe in capital punishment because of their liberal ideology. I remember in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing seeing how many people had changed their view about that just in that case, that Timothy McVay, those guys that were responsible for killing all those kids in the preschool, remember that? In Oklahoma City, in the Murrah Building, they should die. Why? Because they know there are certain things that require a justice to be met. What is that? That's a little bit of a mole for a moment seeing a glimpse of what an eagle sees all the time. That's right. So the legal and judicial context, the moral and spiritual context, and now the redemptive and historical context.

The Redemptive and Historical Context:

The redemptive and historical context is showing us that for us to enter into God's land, something deeply offensive has to happen. I just really covered that in the cross. Now, possessing God's land is going to be very costly. It's going to require the unveiling of God's holy wrath against sin. For you and me to enter into God's land, that's what Joshua is telling us.

Also there's an interesting parallel I need to mention that I forgot to mention in Joshua 3. Remember when they cross into Canaan before they start dealing with the nations there? Remember what the Lord does? The Jordan River which was swelling it's banks, He stops it up just like He did the Red Sea. He walls up the water and they walk through on dry land, again picturing: How do we enter God's land? We must be delivered from Egypt by His miraculous hand. We must be delivered into Canaan by His miraculous hand. It's all of grace. Now let's look at the book of Judges.

Judges:

After they're in the land, from 1350 to 1050, they're under judges, and essentially the message of the book of Judges is that, the question still is: Can God's people dwell in God's land? They have His tabernacle, they have His sacrifices, they have His law—can they dwell in God's land? And the message is an overwhelming NO. It's impossible for God's people to be righteousness enough to dwell in His land, because in the book of Judges, you have these cycles over and over again. Right after Joshua dies, the next generation rises up and forgets the Lord, and what He had done for Israel (Judges Chapter 2), and they just start sinning and worshiping the idols of the people around them, and what God does is He then allows them to be oppressed by the nations that are around them in Canaan, the Philistines, the Moabites, and when they're oppressed, when they're beaten down, they repent and they call out to God again, and the Lord raises up a deliver, a judge, and that judge then delivers them from the hand of the oppressor.

They had twelve judges in the book of Judges. Othniel is the first and Samson is the last. Remember Gideon and Deborah? They're judges in the book of Judges, and these cycles repeat, though. As soon as they're delivered, they start forgetting again, and what you have is it's kind of like a spiral like this. Here they are, and then they decline and they move down. They forget God and they worship idols. They turn away from the Lord, and then they hit the bottom when He sends a nation to judge them. Then they repent and they call out to the Lord, and they come back around. So it's like a circle, but there's this sense in which the circles are like this. They get worse, and worse, and worse. Even the judge, the last judge Samson, is a morally ambiguous person. Remember how depraved he was? So even the judge is not a godly man. And then you have the last five chapters of the book, Judges 17 through 21, which really clarify the message of the book of Judges.

In Judges 17:6, it says everyone did what was right in his own eyes. In those days, Israel had no king. Four times it says Israel had no king, in those last five chapters: Judges 17:6, Judges 18:1, Judges 19:1, and Judges 21:25, and twice it says everyone did what was right in his own eyes, because they had no king. That's in Judges 17:1 and Judges 21:25, and what you see is the incredible wickedness of the people in those last five chapters. It concludes with a story about a man of God who goes into the land of Benjamin and he's out at night, and he can't find a place to stay. He goes into the city and needs a place to stay. It's eerily and intentionally exactly a picture of what happened, remember, when the angels of God went to Sodom. The Lord appeared to Abram and then the two angels went, and they go to Sodom where the outcry of their sins is so great that the Lord has come down to see, and He ends up destroying Sodom.

Remember what happens? The angels come down into the town, they're waiting in the town, Lot lives there, and Lot sees them in the town and says, "Please, quickly. Come with me. Come with me." Why is he hurrying so? "Come with me. Come with me. Come and stay at my house." "No, we'll just stay in the city. We're going to sleep here in the city square." "No, come with me. Come with me." So they go with him, they go to the house, and shortly after they're inside the house, they're fixing a meal for them, and there's a knock at the door. It says all of the men from the old to the very young had surrounded the house and said, "We want those two men to have relations with them. Send them out so that we can have relations with them." What kind of depravity and wickedness? And they were going to do that, and they didn't realize these were angels they were talking about doing that with. How utterly depraved are the people of Sodom. Well, the Lord destroys Sodom.

Then at the end of Judges, what you have is this account where in the land of Israel, in Canaan, the land of Benjamin, this man of God is traveling, he can't get home, and so he stops in the city. This man sees him and brings him into his house, and then there's a knock at the door. "Send the man out. We want to have relations with him." A group of Benjamites wants to have relations with this man. And remember the man says, "No, you shall not do this kind of wickedness," and he gives them his concubine. And so they in their lust have relations with his concubine, and then she dies from the wounds that she experiences from the wrath of these depraved, wicked people. And the man who had given his concubine does something even more offensive. He cuts her body into twelve pieces and sends it to the twelve tribes of Israel. People get a part of a leg, a part of an arm, in the mail, basically. What is this? What kind of wickedness is this? And that guy is basically saying, "This is just to tell you what kind of wickedness happened in the land of Benjamin."

So they come against the Benjamites, and basically wipe out the town. The wrath of God is against that town. Now, what is that saying? Look how depraved and wicked Israel has become again in the land, and the message of that refrain is everyone did what was right in their eyes, because in those days, Israel had no king. The message is we need a king to dwell in God's land. God is prattling with us. Our sin is so great that we need someone to subdue us. Salvation is your will being subdued to God. That's why there is no easy-believism salvation. There is no salvation apart from Lordship salvation, because here in the Old Testament, it's teaching us your will has to be bent and broken to become a child of God. We need God's King. That's the message of Judges.

Samuel:

Then Samuel basically comes along and the people want a king for the wrong reason, but they need God's King, and the Lord gives them Saul. "You wanted a king for the wrong reasons? Here's a king after your own heart." And then He says, "You need a king after My heart: David." That's what that's all about. We need a King like David, a King after God's heart. But even in all the promises that we see in the book of Samuel, 2 Samuel 7, read this and you'll see the story of David wanting to build the temple for God. He's got rest from his enemies. He wants to build a temple for God at the end of his life, and the Lord basically says to him, "You will not build a house for Me. I will build a house for you. You're a man of bloodshed. You can't build it, but one of your descendents will build Me a house." Now, who built the house? Well, his son Solomon built the house, but not really. Solomon was a type. The descendent who built the house is Jesus Christ. Who is it that builds a house for God to dwell in? Jesus Christ came to build His church which is a temple made up of living stones, in which every believer is a stone in God's temple. He's the one who comes to build the house. The reality is how do you come to know God? You and I need a King. We need a King who will defeat our enemies and defeat sin in us.

Ruth:

The book of Ruth is written, I think, after the division of the kingdom, because it appears to be a polemic when you look at, a polemic for the Davidic line. Basically the story of Ruth is saying follow the descendent of David. Now, why did He say that? Remember the story of Ruth. Ruth is a Moabitess.

I almost totally forgot something here. In Joshua, basically the story is everybody in the land is going to be annihilated, but there are some exceptions. You remember Rahab. The very first place they attack is Jericho, and Rahab and her family, they ask to come under the shelter of the Most High God, and the Lord grants them salvation. They say, “Put something out of your window, and everybody in your family, have them in that room and they’ll be okay,” and Rahab and her family become a part of the covenant community. And then in Joshua Chapter 9 and 10 is a really interesting story. The Gibeonites are a tribe that is destined for destruction, and do you know what they do? They hatch a plan. Everybody find your most worn out shoes, put dust all over yourself, and then they walk out to the nation of Israel and say, “We’ve basically been traveling around here. We’re not from there. We’re traveling around. See? Look at our shoes. Make a covenant with us.”

Well, they can make a covenant with somebody outside the land, so they make a covenant with the Gibeonites. Then they find out they were in the land. “You were supposed to be destroyed.” The Lord says, “Honor your covenant.” And in Chapter 10, the Gibeonites, when the other people in Canaan find out about the Gibeonites, five of the kings of Canaan want to come and destroy the Gibeonites. “You made a covenant with the nation of Israel, you wicked people.” They come to destroy the Gibeonites, and the Gibeonites call Joshua, and Joshua and the nation of Israel go and defend the Gibeonites. What’s the message? If you are in the covenant relationship with the Living God, you will be delivered from the wrath of God. Just come under the shelter of His wings, and that’s what you see with Ruth.

Ruth is a Moabitess. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, a Jew from Bethlehem, and her husband and two sons, move to Moab during a time of famine. While they’re there, Naomi’s two sons do what they shouldn’t do, and marry Moabite women, an act of sin, a dishonor to God. All three men die. The father and the two sons die and so the three women are left helpless. Naomi chooses to go back to her homeland hoping to find shelter with the family, and she tells her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to go back to their people, and Orpah does. Orpah weeps and loves her mother-in-law, but she goes back to her people. But Ruth says, “No, from now on your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you go, I will go,” and she goes with Naomi. They’re back in the land and they’re helpless even in the land, because there is no man. They have no land. Though their family has land, their land has been bought out by others while they were gone. They sold it before they left and now they have no place, and then they’re basically living as beggars.

Remember Ruth goes to the field of a man named Boaz, and she's gathering sheaves, and this man Boaz doesn't have a wife. He sees her, he talks with her, he's heard about the story that this is a Moabitess who has come to live with her mother-in-law in poverty in the land of Israel, and he says to her, "God will bless you, for you have come for shelter under His wings." See, he understood the Gospel. He understood what God was saying in His word, which is, "Just come under the wings of Yahweh. He is merciful." And that man, his heart is drawn to this woman. Though he's an older man, remember, she basically makes clear her intentions to be his wife if he's willing. He can't believe it. Obviously she's a beautiful, young woman who wants to be married to him, but he's delighted with it and he brings her as his wife. God's showing kindness to the Moabite, the one outside the covenant invited in. Then in Chapter 4 of Ruth, how do you know it's about David? Look with me at Ruth 4, or listen to these words, the last 4 verses of Ruth 4, which are the last 4 verses of the book:

Ruth 4:18 ~ Now these are the generations of Perez: ...

That's the son of Judah.

...to Perez was born Hezron, 19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, 20 and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, 21 and to Salmon was born Boaz,...

That's the Boaz of the story.

...and to Boaz, Obed, 22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

Ruth was David's great grandmother. This Moabite becomes in the line of the Messiah. In fact, Matthew 1 shows the grace of the Lord God. Look at what He does. In Matthew, you don't include the women in the genealogies, but there are a few women that make the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. When you look at Verse 5, listen to this:

Matthew 1:5 ~ Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab,...

Do you know who Boaz's mother was? She was Rahab the harlot. The man who reached out to a Moabite was himself the son of a Canaanite. A woman who had come for shelter under the wings of God, he had heard the story from his youngest time how she was delivered from the wrath of a holy God by His mercy and grace.

He sees this young woman, another one, and he says, “You have come for shelter under the wings of a Lord who I know will show mercy. I know. I’m testimony of it. I came from her flesh.” Look what he says next:

***...Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.
6 Jesse was the father of David the king. ...***

And there’s one other woman:

...David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba...

Bathsheba was a woman of questionable character. God is a God of grace and mercy. The exceeding sinfulness of sin is set on display and the amazing grace of God. Where sin did abound, there does grace much more abound. That is the message of the Gospel. The problem is we don’t see sin anywhere close to as awful and heinous and wicked as it is, and so the Lord in His kindness is prattling with us to help us see just how sick we are, that we’re really beyond sick. We’re dead in trespasses and sins, so that we can see that we need a Savior who’s able to make us alive. The message of Boaz, remember, is a near kinsman. He’s the near kinsman who is able to redeem Ruth and to bring her to himself as his wife, to provide for Naomi. They have a near kinsman. They needed a relative, someone related to them by family, and there was a family connection. He was able to bring her to himself and be the near kinsman.

What’s the message there? You and I need, if we’re going to not be enslaved, if we’re going to be brought into God’s land, if we’re going to have provision for our needs, we need a near kinsman. We need one who understands us. Since the children share in flesh and blood, He also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who from fear of death were in bondage all their lives. We have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with us, who’s been tempted in every way just like we have, yet without sin.

So the Lord is unfolding His glorious plan of salvation. He’s making it clearer and clearer. Like in the old days when we had to use the horizontal control and the vertical control to make the picture come into focus, or a camera, when you used to have to focus your camera, remember that? It’s coming into clearer and clearer focus, and the more the focus comes clearer, the more you see the image of the glorious Son of God standing before the cross as the victor and Savior of all who will believe.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Father, we are amazed at Your incredible condescension, that You would have even cared to come to speak to people who hated You and despised You. That You would have chosen to make Your will and way known is in itself completely beyond the pale of anything we can imagine. Why would You do that? Why did You not just give us what we deserved? And yet You have not only come to speak to us, but You have made every effort to make it so clear that we would not miss the wonderful message of salvation. We marvel at the perfection of Your wisdom, the miracle of Your condescending meekness and gentleness. You who are exalted above the heavens, who upholds all things by the word of Your power, how tender You are when You touch us. And we see the glory of that tenderness supremely displayed in the Person of our own flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, our near kinsman, Jesus of Nazareth, very God of very God, and very man of very man. He has come near to make You known to us, and You are worthy, oh Lord, of our complete surrender and adoration and worship forever. Such a small thing, we have nothing to give to pay You back, but how could we not give everything that we are, to You? Help every person in this room in seeing the glory of Your love, the wonder of Your kindness, to fall before You now in loving surrender. Lord, You are worthy, and our precious Jesus is worthy. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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