

A Necessary War

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[0 : 0 0] in the passage that we read today from Joshua and in various other accounts and parts of the Old Testament particularly when it comes to the conquest of Canaan and when it comes to the commands of God to eliminate completely not only the men of war in the city but to destroy entire cities men, women and children and oxen and cattle and all the rest of it perhaps these are accounts and narratives with which even sometimes people who love the Lord may struggle they may have difficulties with it and think well that doesn't really sound like the God that we know in Jesus of Nazareth it doesn't sound like our Lord's teaching in the New Testament it must be so different it must be a different kind of God surely but of course it is not a different God it is exactly the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it is the same heritage into which our Lord entered it is the same preparation that the Lord was making in the Old Testament to make way for the new and all that had to be made and all that had to be done to prepare the people of Israel and the land itself for the coming of the Messiah from which the salvation of all nations would be spread out throughout the world all this was part and parcel of the necessary work of the Lord there are however the struggles of the sincere who seek to think well this can't be really from God this must just be what men wrote down it can't be that God commanded this and we have to ask why?

why would God not be the one that has commanded what he says he has commanded in his word? well because it's too nasty all this warfare all this destruction and so on men have been going to war for thousands of years since the dawn of time warfare is never pretty it is never pleasant and clean and nice it is always bloody it is always savage no matter what form it takes and even war that is waged to free a land from tyranny or oppression that war will itself be savage in the execution of it evil goes on regardless it has since the fall what God is concerned with here is that the land that he has set apart for his own people should itself be cleansed of evil should itself be cleansed of the paganism and the cruelty and all the evil that was going on there it's rather like if someone were to think or to say at the end of the second world war let's say well we've defeated nazism and we've won the war so rather than destroy everything what would be nice is let's just move in and occupy the areas of Germany and Austria and Poland and all these other places and we let them carry on with the concentration camps and the gas chambers and eliminating the Jews and so on we just live side by side with them they do their thing and we'll do our thing and if they want to kill off the handicapped and so on we just let them do it and we just live beside them and we don't criticise and we don't judge and we let them do all these things because you know we don't want to be nasty and people would say yes but you can't do that and we look at all the evil that was going of course we have to stop that of course we have to what do you imagine was going on in the land of Canaan before the Israelites entered in there may not have been concentration camps but evil was certainly unrestrained the struggles of the sincere often I would suggest respectfully focus upon the assumption that the world and that God's revelation and plan and all that he has done is meant to be man centred and it is not the universe is not man centred the Bible is not man centred the Holy Land was never meant to be man centred creation was never meant to be man centred what God does is not all about man it is

God centred God in his mercy seeks to redeem a people to himself that they might dwell with him for all eternity as his children but what is he redeeming them from he is redeeming them from evil and if evil is to have its own broken on people if there is to be a sanctuary if there is to be what's the trendy politically correct term now is a safe space if there is to be that then evil must be as far as possible eliminated from it this is God's intention and it is God's plan because the world and the work of God is intended to be God centred and not man centred now we have for example way back in Genesis 15 chapter to which we often refer

God's promise to Abraham that he would inherit this land that his seed would be as the stars of heaven from multitude and he talks about the Lord talks to Abraham about his descendants going down into Egypt and being oppressed 400 years but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full what does that mean it means that in the holy land in the land of Canaan that Abraham was to inherit or his descendants were to inherit evil was going on and it was still going on but the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full in other words there was more evil to be filled up so that when the Lord unleashed Joshua and the Israelites upon this evil it would be seen to be just and we might think well why didn't God just put an end to a there and then why didn't he just stop all the evil well he did that once before of course with the flood and people still say oh imagine destroying everyone with the flood isn't that terrible isn't that cruel you know all these men women and children and so on so he did wipe out evil once before now it is far more targeted now he intends to preserve to himself a land and a people exclusively for himself and when he clears out the evil from that land it must be seen to be just and in

Genesis 15 verse 16 clearly if God were to unleash the sort of equivalent of the conquest of Canaan at that point it would not yet be justice the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full they still have time for the land to be theirs they still have time you might say to turn to righteousness still have time to recognize the government of Abraham and subsequently of Isaac and Jacob of course they don't but there is opportunity there is time the struggles of the sincere so often ignore the mercy and patience of God the promise to Abraham is that in the fullness of time this inheritance will come Abraham might have thought oh Lord it would be really nice if it could have it now it would be really nice if Isaac could get it when Isaac is born it would be really nice if I could live to see it no he doesn't live to see it Isaac doesn't live to see it

[8 : 26] Jacob doesn't live to see it generations do not live to see it God is holding off their inheritance in deference to the pagan! the pagan Amorites that they may have justice that they may have the land that is eventually going to be taken away from them so that they can have it for all the years that are guaranteed to them he will withhold it from his own people so that they may have the fullness of their heritage and fill up the iniquity of their own sin the promise to Abraham foresees all this we should never underestimate however the extent of evil that was going on in what became the holy land in the land of Canaan we talked in comparison with the third reich with the concentration camps and the evil that was done there we couldn't envisage living alongside that and just pretending that was okay in Leviticus the Lord spells out we'll read a few verses here in chapter 18 verse 17 now shall not a lot of it is sexual related you'll notice but we tend to think that all sexual sin is always consensual that it's always two equal parties happily consenting to engage in this activity such is the evil of man that very often it will not be the case of two equal consenting parties it will often be the case of a strong compelling a weaker partner in the case we read thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter neither shalt thou take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness we're talking about three four generations of one person having relations with three or four different generations of one family they are her near kinswoman it is wickedness neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister to vex her to uncover her nakedness beside the other in her lifetime also thou shalt not profane the name of thy god i am the lord what that meant was there was a practice of having a hollow brass statue of the god moloch and the centre the belly of it would be like an oven a centre empty they would put the infant in there they would shut it in with a fire lit underneath it and it would be literally roasted to death in the oven and they would be banging the drums and playing their round instruments so that the screams of the infant would be drowned out and it's horrendous to recant but this is what they were doing this is the kind of evil that was going on in the land of

Canaan thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire of the moloch neither shalt thou profane the name of thy god i am the lord thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind it is abomination neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defy thyself there with best reality neither shalt any woman stand before a beast to lie down there unto it is confusion defy not he yourselves in any of these things and here's a key verse verse 24 of Leviticus 18 for in for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you god isn't just saying to himself what are all the things i can tell them not to do can i give them a whole list of commands that they'll think james i never thought of doing that that's a particular perversion that never crossed my mind why is god spelling out these things because these are precisely the things the israelites will encounter in the land of canaan this is what they will come up against these kind of practices these kind of depravities and cruelties and exploitation the land is defiled therefore i do visit the iniquity thereof upon it and the land itself vomited out her inhabitants ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments and shall not commit any of these abominations neither any of your own nation or any stranger that sojourn with you for all these abominations have the men of the land done which were before you and the land is defiled that the land spew not you out also when ye defile it as it spewed out the nations that were before you for whosoever shall commit any of these abominations even the souls that commit them shall not any of these abominable customs which were committed before you and that you defile not yourself that

I am the Lord your God some of these things you couldn't even you didn't have to stretch the imagination to come up with them God recounts them because they are happening already in Canaan these are examples of the kind of oppression and cruelty and abuse and exploitation which was routine amongst the pagan Canaan this is one reason why the land had to be cleansed and why those practicing entire communities and cities and nations practicing these things had to be eliminated from the holy land the extent of evil should never be underestimated!

in that land the extent to which God's wrath was now being poured out upon it should never be underestimated but we should also recognize we talked with the children about how it's necessary to eliminate the flies from the kitchen or from hospitals or places where food is and so on you can't tame them you can't engage in a conversation with them you can't say well you stay over there and the fruit stays here and we'll just make sure that we can all live happily together no they cannot coexist because their nature is to feed upon filth and carcasses and human or animal waste their nature is to feed up these things and spread these things to procreate to spread to lay their eggs to reproduce flies and dirt and disease whereas our health and survival is dependent upon keeping these things away from what we eat and from when we are wounded or needing care in hospital or whatever we have to keep cleanliness on the one side and the flies business is filth and rot and dirt and disease not to himself but that's what he spreads to others so these two are incompatible one with the other now the fly lives happily outside and about in the world he gets on find whenever there's a corpse or an animal has died itself flies will feed and breed there happily or whatever there's animal waste left on the road you'll see flies buzzing around or whatever the case may be but in our kitchens in our homes where what we have to keep clean cannot coexist with these things

God of course is not saying to the Israelites now you go and eliminate all the Babylonians and the Assyrians and go and destroy the Egyptians and the Hittites they're a bad one as well go and wipe them out no evil is allowed to continue you might say it is permitted to carry on its pagan ways in all these nations round about the Holy Land but in this comparatively little strip of land and it is a little strip you look at the Holy Land on an atlas in relation to the countries round about it is a tiny narrow little strip it is from the coast on the left to the line that is the Jordan and the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee on the right it might take a little bit of land to the right of that and the distance the length of the land from Mount Hermon in the north where you could theoretically be skiing on the snows of Mount

[16 : 59] Hermon in the morning and you could be dabbling your feet in the Dead Sea with desert round about you in the afternoon such is the tiny proximity of the land of Israel you could have the lush farmlands of the vale of Jezreel the vale of Sheer on the one hand and you've got the jagged rocky desert mountains of the wilderness of Judea you've got all this different diversity in such a tiny area which is the crossroads of the world if you're going to go from Egypt up into Europe or east into Asia you've got to pass through this tiny strip of land if you're going to come from Arabia up into what became Europe or eastwards into Asia you've got to go through it you've got to pass through this it is the crossroads the centre of the world and there the Lord decreed to place his people with this rich and diverse variety of climate in one little place where there is water where there is land where there is efficiency of all things but it's on a like a microcosm and this the Lord decrees to cleanse evil is allowed to flourish all round about all the other pagan nations are left in peace but

God's determination to cleanse this piece of land should never be underestimated he makes it possible because he intends it to happen we see in verse 11 God cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah they died there were more which died with hillstones and they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword verse 14 for the Lord fought for Israel again at verse 42 we read there all these kings and they ran to Joshua take it one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel we see God's determination to make it happen in Deuteronomy 32 verse 29 we read oh that they that's the Israelites were wise that they understood this they would consider their laughing how should one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight except their rock had sold them and the

Lord had shut them up how is it you flee before your enemies unless I deserted you when you were winning how do you think you won against such huge odds except the fact that I was with you did you think it was your own military strength their rock is not as our rock even our enemies themselves being judges for their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah their grapes are full of gall their clusters are bitter their wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps is not this made up in store with me and sealed among my treasures to me belong with vengeance and recompense their foot shall slide in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand and the things that shall come upon them make his later on Joshua reaptured the children of Israel after they had conquered the holy land and he said exactly these things be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of

Moses that ye turn not aside there from to the right hand to the left that ye come not among these nations these that remain among you neither make mention but cleave unto the Lord your God as ye have done this day for the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong but as for you no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day one man of you shall chase a thousand for the Lord your God he is that fight for you and he that promised you as he that have promised you take the Lord your God and if you do in any wise go back and cleave to the remnant of these nations even these that remain among you and shall make marriages with them and go in unto them and lay to you know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you but they!

shall be snares and! scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes until you punish them off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you God is not in one sense you could say God's not racist God doesn't say the Jews the Israelites they're my precious people I hate all these other nations God rather loves righteousness and holiness it is holiness not heritage that God is concerned with and when his own people of Israel turn against him when they turn back to do the ways of the very things that the heathen nations round about them did God has no hesitation although he bears long with them he has no hesitation in destroying their city and sending them into exile that's what he does to his own people when they turn against them the land!

[22 : 16] itself God intends to keep pure because it is to be the crucible through which he will bring through the fires of his cleansing that which is ultimately the purest of all his only begotten son that is where he is determined to do it in this land this is where the people amongst whom he is determined to bring him forth from the Israelites but he will not have them simply paganizing their little lives away he will not have them going back to the ways of the Canaanites they are required to be godly faithful pure!

be ye holy! for !! the Lord your! and holy! it is holiness not heritage righteousness not racial identity that God is concerned with and we saw this the other week in Isaiah 56 I think it is where God commends the son of the stranger who will turn to him the foreigner who will turn to him we have in the genealogy of our Lord we have particularly those women who are mentioned in our Lord's genealogy in Matthew chapter 1 they are usually foreigners they are those who are not native racial Israelites Rahab the harlot from Jericho we've got Ruth the Moabite we've got Bathsheba she was the wife of Uriah and so on we've got those who were not themselves racially Israelite women but they loved the Lord and they served the Lord and they were used of the Lord to prepare the way for the coming of his only begotten son so

God's determination is not oh my people wave the flag isn't it brilliant but rather my righteousness he will exalt his own name and he uses his people to do it but if they turn against him then he will have no hesitation in destroying them as well and sending them into exile you see in exile there were lessons to be learned with the exile and destruction of Jerusalem the people had time to think in terms of what did we actually do with the temple when we had it we built pagan shrines in it and we sacrificed our own children there in the valley of Hinnom and we weren't exactly as we should have been they had time to think on it all the times that they had their Israelite Jehovah based heritage they were benefiting from the Lord's protection just as in our country nowadays we are still with the remnant the shell if you like of a

Christian heritage which is the basis and foundation of such freedoms as we still enjoy but when they were in exile the Lord exposed them to unremitting paganism if you want to know what it's like worshipping these other gods he said fine go into exile and you can experience what it's like to live under the yoke of these other gods and they learned it the hard way the Babylonians and the Assyrians and the other nations had no mitigation of mercy or grace or patience with the Israelites the way God did they learned and when they came back they had learned their lesson they were a fraction of the numbers that had been there before but such fraction as there was was fearing the Lord and faithful to the Lord and in that return they were waiting the time God is not obsessed with a particular nation of people but he is obsessed with his own holiness and righteousness and that has to be kept perfect and pure you see when

Nehemiah criticizes the elders of Israel and Judah when they come back to the land and some of them start marrying again with the Canaanitish women round about and their children becomes half Israelite and half Canaanitish in those days also I saw Jews that had married wives of Ashdod and of Ammon and of Moab and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jews language but according to the language of each people and I contend with them and so on so it's partly Jewish heritage partly the fear of the Lord partly the Canaanite paganism and so partly the language of the Hebrews partly the language of the Canaanites say well we should be able to live in that maybe let's have the flies back in if they're crawling in that little bit of butter well that's okay I'll just take my knife to the end of butter at the other end if they're crawling all over this bit of bread milk well I'll just scoop out a wee bit of milk that they're not in that'll be okay no the whole thing is defiled you can't say well this wee bit is defiled but that bit's okay it's good in parts it's alright they've got partly the speech of the Hebrews and partly the speech of the

[27 : 33] Canaanites it's partly the pagan gods we wash it partly the true God and this is what the world would like to think is okay you can have the God of Israel you can have Jesus Christ on one hand and you also have these other gods too no the very fact that you have all these other things mixed in means it is defiled it is not the purity the holiness the single minded devotion that the Lord requires and when the Jews and the Israelites had learned that there was then this waiting time this waiting time until the physical fulfillment what was the physical fulfillment the physical fulfillment was that time when the fullness of time was come as it says in Galatians God said for the son made of a woman made under the law that he might redeem them that were under the law that they might be saved now Mary herself the mother of our Lord

Mary herself with an ordinary person's body an ordinary woman's body the womb that the Lord gave her yes she had at least six other children after that but the most important thing she would ever do with the body the Lord had given her was to carry and bring forth the Lord Jesus Christ and that was her chief end all the other blessings came with it yes indeed but that was her chief end just as the chief end of the holy land was to be the home for the Messiah just as the chief end of the people of Israel was to be as it were the national vessel through which our Lord should be brought just as the purpose of the temple was to be that into which our Lord should enter as the glory of God coming into the temple in my father's house to be a house of prayer for all nations but you've made it a den of thieves and when the glory departs from that house then the purpose of that temple is finished the holy land is still blessed because of its connotations of what the

Lord did there in the past but its purpose then was to be the springboard to send the message of salvation out into all the world the message of Christ out into all the world just as he did not remain forever in the womb of his mother once he was born once he was grown he lived that life and preached the word of his father and he rose again victorious over the grave after he died on the cross all of these things he did when he was grown but the womb of the virgin was vital at the time that he should be brought forth from her the land and the ancient heritage Joshua the cleansing and the conquest of the land for that time and that place that was if you like the womb from which the Lord's people were to be brought forth and in the fullness of time the Messiah was to come if any part of that history any part of that cleansing any part of that work of

God was interfered with and the fulfillment and the reality of the redemption under God could not have happened there was a physical fulfillment with the coming of our Lord and as with all that is physical in scripture all that is Old Testament points to the new all that is physical and bodily points to the spirit spiritual so that our spiritual lessons for us to now likewise here your life your body and soul is meant to be designed to be commanded to be set apart for the Lord that is what the word holy means set apart we are called to be this we cannot stop the evil that will go on around us in the world we cannot limit it we have not the power to change the world we can't stop the flies from buzzing around on carcasses or piles of waste or goodness knows all what out and around in the world but in our own home in our own kitchen in our own bathroom in our own bedroom or whatever we can eliminate them from there you can't stop sin from the world but you can be determined to eliminate it in your own life in your own heart in your own spirit in your own body but you won't do that in your own strength you can only do it in the strength of Christ your life your body and soul is required to be cleansed within and without completely not just partially you see whatever little personal pet sins we cling to and say well of course

I love the Lord but you know not completely I want to keep this wee bit for myself of course I want my loaf of bread kept fine but this wee bit the flies can crawl on at the end this block of butter is fine but the flies can have that wee bit this jug of milk is okay but I let the flies swim round the room I want to keep a wee bit that's defiled no if any of it is defiled all of it is defiled and the Lord calls us not to confess some of our sin but to confess all of our sin to put away all of our sin to repent all of our sin to be cleansed within and without we see the body the life the soul we've been given there was a time just like in the land of Canaan when God said the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full the evil was it was allowed to go on until the time of judgment fell until the conquest of Canaan and Joshua and Israelites came and eliminated it all and so likewise for you and me there was a time when we didn't know the Lord as our personal saviour and we carried on with the ignorance of our own sin we read in Acts 17 verse 30 the times of this ignorance

[33 : 54] God went at the times of this ignorance God went at all the sin of our lives before we were converted before we came to know the Lord but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent there was a time when that sin just went on unchecked just like it did in Canaan but then there comes a day of judgment and what God says in his mercy is before the day of judgment falls before the wrath of God falls on sin which it will fall whether upon the Canaanites or upon the Israelites or the Jews or the Gentiles or the Scots or the English or you or me or anybody else God's hatred is not against people God's hatred is against sin and his judgment will fall on sin you may guarantee it the times of this ignorance God went at and now commandeth all men everywhere to repent this spiritual application think of your little life your little body and soul as like that little fraction of land the holy land that tiny little strip set apart in all the vast atlas of the world evil will still go on outside the Hittites the Babylonians the Assyrians the Egyptians they all still carried on doing their evil but in the holy land

God said no wipe out the evil and establish that kingdom of righteousness over which he himself would reign you can't change the rest of the world but as Joshua said at the end of his own book there in chapter 24 as for me and my house we will serve the Lord this is an ongoing warfare you could say the conquest of Canaan was not the work of a day yes and later on in Joshua 8 there or 12 we've got a list of 31 kings that were defeated and destroyed and Joshua took their land but the warfare was ongoing and the warfare for us will be ongoing Paul writes in Romans 7 we read from verse 18 I know that in me that is in my flesh well if no good thing for the will is present with me but how to perform it is that which I cannot find to do how to perform that which is good I find not for the good that I would

I do not for the evil which I would not that I do now if I do that I would not it is no more I that do it but sin that dwell in me I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me I delight in the law of God after inward man verse 23 of Romans 7 but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but the flesh the law of sin this warring is going on and it will go on in your life until the day the Lord calls you hence but by God's grace and increase of his mercy the old flesh the old sin grows weaker and weaker and the spirit goes stronger and stronger 2nd Corinthians 10 verse 3 for though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through

God to the pulling down of strongholds casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God when you build a great palace or a great house you don't start with a beautiful stone first of all you must dig a hole in the ground it will be messy it will be rocky it will be dirty it will look uninspiring and yet if you don't lay a deep good solid foundation it doesn't matter what you build on top of it it's going to sink and the Lord knew what he intended to bring forth from the womb of the holy land as it were the physical preparation for the spiritual reality that sanctified little space that would be the springboard for salvation to come to all the world God knew what he was doing and God intended what he did and yes all the sacrifice was worth it and all the judgment was deserved and what

God does he does in righteousness because the world and the work of providence and the word of God and the work of grace is not man centred it is God centred it is not about us it is all about Christ through