



READING RESPONSIBLY

Correctly Handling the Word of Truth

LESSON 06: HISTORY

Just the facts, ma'am?

I. Introduction

Read Joshua 10:40 and Judges 1:19-33. Did the Israelites completely defeat the Canaanites?

→ [Read Joshua 10:40](#)

So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.

→ [Read Judges 1:19-21, 27-28](#)

¹⁹The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had chariots fitted with iron. ²⁰As Moses had promised, Hebron was given to Caleb, who drove from it the three sons of Anak. ²¹The Benjamites, however, did not drive out the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites.

²⁷But Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth Shan or Taanach or Dor or Ibleam or Megiddo and their surrounding settlements, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that land. ²⁸When Israel became strong, they pressed the Canaanites into forced labor but never drove them out completely.

II. Overview of Genre & Context: History

- Timeline
 - Crossing Jordan: 1406-1290 BC
 - Into the 400s and beyond

III. Big Issues

A. God and Violence

Herem

→ [Read Joshua 6:17-18, 21](#)

¹⁷The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.

²¹They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

- “devoted to destruction”
- Under the ban – do not touch
- Safeguard against Canaanite wickedness
- Worries about contamination

IV. Specific Examples

A. Rahab

→ [Read Joshua 6:17](#)

The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

B. Gibeonites

→ [Read Joshua 9:3-7, 14-15](#)

³However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, ⁴they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. ⁵They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. ⁶Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, “We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us.”

⁷The Israelites said to the Hivites, “But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?”

¹⁴The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. ¹⁵Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

V. Reading History Responsibly: Strategies/Encouragement

Following Ryan Bonfiglio

A. Extend charity

Don't assume the worst; Listen carefully before responding

1. Listen to the text

- What is the text saying?
- What details (words, themes, ideas) stand out?
- Whose voices and perspectives are dominant?
- What is the literary context and genre of the text?

2. Do not assume the worst

- What conditions, historically and culturally, led to this point of view?
- What has driven the author to put things in this way?
- What differences exist between the conditions and experiences of my faith community and the one that first received this text?

B. Argue and ask honest questions

- Where do you see terror in this text?
- How is God implicated in injustice and violence?
- Whose voices and experiences are missing?
- What ethical principles are being violated?
- What gaps or inconsistencies do you see in the story?
- Where do I disagree with past interpretations of this text? Why?

C. Dialogue

Bring other texts into conversation

1. Let scripture interpret scripture

- What other texts would I bring into the conversation? Why?
- What perspectives or insights do these texts add?
- How do these other texts help clarify questions I might have about the text of terror in question?

"God is like Jesus. God has always been like Jesus. There has never been a time when God was not like Jesus. We have not always known this, but now we do." – Brian Zahnd

2. Rule of Faith

- What teachings of the church might be relevant to the conversation?
- How do they help shape my interpretation?

D. Search for what is edifying

Look for negative examples; allow the text to re-sensitize us to violence and suffering

1. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater

- Is there anything edifying here for the church today?
- Is there anything here that can benefit our identity as disciples of Christ?
- How does God show up in this story?

2. Prescriptive vs. descriptive

- Is this text meant to be prescriptive or descriptive? Why?
- Does the narrator or any character offer an explicit assessment?
- Is this text meant to be an example of what not to do? How so?

3. Re-sensitize us

- What types of "terror" does this text draw my attention to?
- Where does this type of terror exist in the world today? in my own community?
- Why is it important for me and my faith community to be aware of this type of suffering and violence?

VI. Next Lesson: Gospels

Read Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20. Who exactly is blessed? What words did Jesus say?