

## Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

### Joshua: Promised Land or Conquest Narrative ~ Easter Sunday

The World **BEHIND** Easter and Resisting the Weaponization (or hierarchizing) of the Resurrection:

Across the ancient Mediterranean world, figures such as **Romulus** (founder of Rome, 8th c. BCE) and **Apollonius of Tyana** (Turkey, 1st c. CE), along with deities/demigods like **Dionysius/Bacchus** (“son of God” or Zeus and a mortal woman, Semele, Greece, 1400–1200 BCE) demonstrate post-death appearances, exaltations, and returns that functioned as **religious and imperial constructs** used to authorize power and hierarchy. Recognizing this wider context allows us, an interfaith collective, to resist the weaponization of resurrection language without diminishing Jesus’ resurrection, instead clarifying how Christianity later misapplied claims to exclusive access to God through the “only resurrected savior.”

#### **Subject: “Joshua: Promised Land or Conquest Narrative”**

The book of Joshua is the first book of the Deuteronomistic history, or a *composite work* (many authors/redactors), shaped over time from older oral traditions that were edited and reframed during the monarchic or “king” period (Saul, David, Solomon). Joshua was likely written in the context of the Babylonian exile (late 7th century BCE), which helps explain its theological and ideological emphases. As the first book of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–Judges–Samuel–Kings), Joshua is written through a Deuteronomic lens that stresses exclusive loyalty to YHWH and the centralization of worship in one sanctioned place (cultic worship). Joshua is presented as the successor to Moses, but the narrative subtly relativizes Moses by advancing Joshua’s leadership (e.g., “Moses is dead” God will now speak to Joshua)—raising questions about continuity, authority, and later Christological contrasts, especially given that Joshua (*Yehoshua* in Hebrew) is translated as Jesus in Greek. In reference to the World OF the text, Joshua draws directly on **Deuteronomy 7 and 20**, where the command to invade Canaan and “destroy everything that breathes” establishes the ideological framework for Joshua’s conquest narrative, which then sets up the broader Deuteronomistic storyline of land taking, land division among the twelve tribes, and covenantal accountability.

#### **I. Historical Concerns (cont. in “Redeeming Joshua, III”)**

**Numbers 13: 27-33** And they reported to him (Moses) and said, “We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup>Yet the **people who live in the land** are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large, and besides, we saw the **descendants of Anak** there. <sup>29</sup>The **Amalekites** live in the land of the Negeb; the **Hittites**, the **Jebusites**, and the **Amorites** live in the hill country, and the **Canaanites** live by the sea and along the Jordan.”

<sup>30</sup>But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” <sup>31</sup>Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we.” <sup>32</sup>So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. <sup>33</sup>There we saw **the Nephilim** (the Anakites come from the Nephilim), and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

A. If the Noahic flood (**Gen. 6-9**) killed every human on earth except Noah and his family, how

## Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

do the Nephilim (offspring of *bene Elohim* or “heavenly beings” who impregnated human women, **Gen. 6:1-4** – also reference **Job 1-2; Psalm 82**) or their descendants still exist? The Noahic Flood Narrative Is a Theological Reset, Not a Total Erasure or Complete Genetic Reset. Genesis presents the flood as God’s response to violence, not a forensic account of extinction. Archeologically, we know the flood was regional, not global.

### II. Moral and Ethical Concerns

**Deut. 20:16b-17** you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. <sup>17</sup> Indeed, you shall annihilate them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as the Lord your God has commanded,

**Jos. 10:40, 11:14, 20** Joshua “defeated the whole land,” “left no survivors” and “destroyed all that breathed.”

A. There are people in the Promised Land.

1. Is Joshua a Genocide? A Conquest Narrative? A Justification of Colonialism?

B. The Sun stands still in support of the conquest/genocide/vengeance (**Jos. 10:12-14**).

1. Would God alter nature to extend bloodshed?

C. (**Jos. 2 & 6**) Rahab, who hid the Israelite spies as they “spied out” the land, is pictured as “converting” to Yahwism.

1. But, she converts to survive. In essence, convert or die.

a. How might this inform later Christian history (e.g., the Crusades) and current Evangelical conversion propaganda (i.e., “receive Jesus as personal savior or burn in Hell eternally”)?

b. Rahab’s culture worshipped many gods – adding one more god to escape destruction was a “no-brainer.”

c. Similar to Rahab’s “conversion,” **Jos. 24:15b** and “choose this day whom you will serve” is positioned as transactional. In essence, if you will let go of *other* gods (i.e., ancestral religious practice) I will empower you to destroy other tribes and take their land.

### III. Redeeming Joshua

A. We cannot redeem the character of God (in this divine genocide/conquest narrative) while also trying to prove the historical accuracy of Joshua.

B. Did the conquest even happen?

1. Scholarly consensus on **Jos. 6-12**, the conquest of Canaan, reveals this event did not happen as they are not archaeologically supported.

a. In the conquest of Canaan, 31 cities were taken/destroyed (**Jos. 12:7-24**), yet only 3 cities show archeological signs of violent conflict – and these seems to be inner tribal conflict, not war with a foreign military.

b. *Jericho*, at best, was minimally inhabited at the time of the conquest. There were no massive protective walls.

2. This conquest is likely a *literary tale* rather than archaeologically provable history. Why

## Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

does this matter? While it cannot redact man’s depiction of a genocidal God in the Hebrew Bible, it does invite a reconsideration of the nature of God apart from man’s description.

### C. Hybridity of the Hebrews and Canaanites (repositioning “Conquest”).

1. The hybridity of the Hebrews and Canaanites undermines the conquest and genocide narrative, revealing that Israel emerged largely from *within* Canaanite society—through cultural continuity, intermarriage, shared religion, and gradual differentiation—rather than through the violent replacement of a foreign population.
2. Israel’s beginnings are not exactly clear - originally they were made up of a mixture of groups (e.g., Canaanites, nomads).
  - a. Why does this matter? Genocidal tales against the Canaanites serve more as *triumphal storytelling* than history. Yet, this does shine a light on the rhetorical goals of the redactors who wrote Joshua. Theological perspectives and historical accuracy are vastly different.

### D. The *pluriformity* of Joshua (multiple unfixed texts circulating that were translated into Greek) destabilizes its consistency.

1. This means there were different versions of events.
2. Joshua repeatedly claims total annihilation (**Josh. 6:21; 10:40; 11:11, 14, 20**), yet the persistence of Canaanites elsewhere (**Jos. 13:1, 13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12-13**) exposes these statements as contradictory and as theological propaganda rather than historical. The land cannot be simultaneously fully conquered and unconquered.
3. The ethical and historical consistency collapses—and it must. If Joshua existed in multiple evolving forms, claims that God *once* required genocide become dismissible.

### E. One Bible story, or any Bible story, is not the authoritative or final word on God.

1. Joshua is not about what God did, but rather what people claimed God authorized and what happens when faith merges with land, power, and fear.

## IV. Joshua and Jesus

A. Joshua and Jesus share a name (*Yehoshua*), but they embody radically different visions of God’s power and purposes.

1. Joshua represents a theology of land, exclusion, and divinely sanctioned violence, where faithfulness is measured by conquest, boundary-making, and the removal of the “other.”
2. Jesus reclaims the name and reorients it toward justice, inclusion, and restorative love, refusing violence, welcoming enemies and outsiders, and centering the poor, the marginalized, and the wounded as the primary locus of God’s reign.
3. Where Joshua “secures” God’s promise through domination and destruction, Jesus announces God’s reign through healing, table fellowship, non-coercion, and self-giving love, exposing how sacred narratives can sacralize power and offering instead a vision of God whose authority is revealed not by taking land or lives, but by liberating, reconciling, and making whole.

## V. The World IN FRONT of the text.

### A. Biblical Violence

The phrases “kill, murder, put to death, do not spare, destroy” appear 170 times in the

