

Warfare

Today, we come to a difficult passage. It is not difficult to understand; it is difficult in the sense that it can be hard to get our minds around WHAT God commands Israel to do as they enter the land. There are perspectives that help (see below), however, even if we don't get answers to all of our questions we must make sure we don't lose sight of what is clearly revealed about God and what He seeks from His people. Then and now, God seeks a people wholly devoted to Him who will showcase God and all of His goodness and glory.

Perspectives Steve offered on Israel's warfare:

- God had promised the land to Abraham (Gen. 12:7).
- God is sovereign over all creation (Ps. 24:1).
- The nations living in the land were not "innocent;" they were very wicked (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:5; 12:31).
- The conquest of the land was not genocide; it was divine judgment.
- The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
- God is a just judge (Gen. 18:25).

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-11

1. How is God revealed in this passage?
2. What commands does Moses give to Israel (vv. 1-5)?
3. How do you reconcile these commands with the first part of Deut. 4:31?
4. Israel's war policy at this time in her history included the concept of *hērem*, which means to "utterly destroy" (v. 2). How does this concept relate to the idea that God wants His people, Israel, to give Him comprehensive, exclusive, whole-hearted obedience (see also Lev. 20:22-24)?

Steve said:

This (i.e. God's desire to keep the nation from idolatry) is the reason why God commanded the Israelites to conquer the Land: so that they could be a holy people, separate from all the other peoples on the face of the earth. Israel would be a showcase of God's mercy and grace and power. Through Israel God would introduce the Messiah who would bring blessing to all the families of the earth. Israel could not fulfill her calling unless she occupied the Land and lived out her holiness as stipulated in the old covenant.

5. How does God describe Israel in verse 6? How does that description relate to what God commands in verses 1-5?
6. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. What hints of Deut. 7:6 do you see in this passage?
7. God does not command us to conquer lands or drive out other nations; He does, however, call us to the same mission Israel had to be a people exclusively devoted to Him so that we could "showcase [His] mercy and grace and power." How does our own holiness relate to our ability to do this?
8. What does warfare (i.e. the battle for holiness) look like in our day? How do we fight this battle?
9. Where is the frontline of your own battle for personal holiness being waged these days?