

The Conquest

THE STORY #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - March 8, 2026 - Joshua 21:43-45

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our series called THE STORY: How the Bible Explains Everything. We're on a 12-week journey through the meta-narrative of Scripture. From creation to consummation, the Bible tells one great story of a good and holy God rescuing His broken world through Jesus.

So far, we've seen:

- The **Creation** – God made everything good and made humanity in His image to live under His loving rule. Yet, sin fractured our relationship with God, with one another, and with creation itself.
- The **Catastrophe** – Human wickedness multiplied until judgment came through the flood. Yet even in judgment, God showed mercy, rescuing a remnant through Noah and his family.
- The **Covenant** – God made a unilateral covenant with Abram, walking the Blood Path for both God and man and setting the stage for its fulfillment in Christ as the Seed of Abraham and His payment on the cross.
- The **Crossing** – God miraculously saved Israel from slavery in Egypt by His grace and power, leading them across the Red Sea on dry land and defeating Pharaoh's army.
- **The Commandments** – God saves His people first and then He speaks to them about how to live as His covenant people.

In today's message entitled **THE CONQUEST**, we'll be looking at the story of God's people finally coming into possession of the Promised Land after 40 long years in the wilderness.

Need: We live in a world of broken promises. We've been let down by leaders, friends, and even our own strength. When we look at the mess of our lives, or the mess in the Book of Joshua, we wonder: Where is God? Is He actually in control? Sometimes we feel like we're stuck in a "wilderness" of waiting, wondering if we will ever truly "possess" what has God promised.

Trans: To understand how we can trust God today, we can look back at how He finished what He started with Israel. After years of wandering and warfare, Joshua stands at the end of his life and looks back at the "Big Story." He doesn't point to his own leadership; he points to God's faithfulness.

BODY: In Joshua 21, Joshua concluded his summary of the conquest by triumphantly declaring that the Lord had faithfully fulfilled every covenant promise made to Israel. We can see that the Lord faithfully fulfills every promise He makes to His people. How does the Lord demonstrate His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to His people? The text reveals **three demonstrations** of the Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to His people.

Text: Joshua 21:43-45 (ESV) 43 Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. 44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. 45 Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

THREE DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS:

1. The demonstration of a **Secured Inheritance**.

EXP: (43) This verse reaches all the way back to Genesis 12 and Genesis 15, when God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land. For centuries that promise looked impossible. Abraham never owned the land. Israel became slaves in Egypt. The wilderness generation wandered for forty years. Yet here Joshua declares: God "gave" the land He "swore to give to their fathers." Israel did not win the land by their strength. God gave it. Yes, there were battles. Yes, there were armies. But behind every victory stood the power and promise of God. Jericho's walls fell (Josh 6). The sun stood still (Josh 10). Enemies fled. God secured the inheritance He promised.

"**LORD**" (43,44,45 - 4x) (יְהוָה, *yēhōvâ*) - Yahweh, Jehovah. The covenantal name of God.

"**Gave**" (43-44) (נָתַן, *nātan*) - to give, bestow, grant, permit, ascribe. Joshua compresses the entire conquest into a single verb: The LORD "gave."

"**All the land**" (43, 5x) (כָּל, *kōl*) - all, the whole. It says God gave them "all" the land. But we must look back to Joshua 1:3, where God says,

The Conquest

THE STORY #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - March 8, 2026 - Joshua 21:43-45

Joshua 1:3 (ESV) Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you...

Do you see the tension? The land was **given** (past tense, sovereign decree), but it had to be **trodden** (present tense, human appropriation). God provided the *potential*, but Israel had to take *possession*.

Joshua 21 is more “ a theological summary, not journalistic reporting.” (Howard, *NAC: Joshua*). The author is zooming out to 30,000 feet to say: “Look at the big picture: God is a promise-keeper.” However, Joshua 13:1 which said “there remains yet very much land to possess” and the Book of Judges are the Military Audits. They zoom-in to ground level to show that while the war was won, the mopping-up operations failed because of Israel’s lack of faith.

“**He swore**” (43) (עֲבַד, *šāba*) - to swear, take an oath

“**Fathers**” (43) (אָב, *’āb*) - head or founder of a household, family, or clan. God promised the land of Canaan to Israel’s “fathers.” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“**Possession**” (43) (שָׂדֶה, *yāraš*) - to seize, take possession off, inherit, occupy.

ARG: It was God who “gave” them the land. They did not earn it by their own strength.

Psalm 44 (NLT) 1 O God, we have heard it with our own ears— our ancestors have told us of all you did in their day, in days long ago: 2 You drove out the pagan nations by your power and gave all the land to our ancestors. You crushed their enemies and set our ancestors free. 3 They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strong arm that gave them victory. It was your right hand and strong arm and the blinding light from your face that helped them, for you loved them.

ILL: **Crossing the Jordan River.** God tells Joshua to have the priests stand in the Jordan with the Ark to lead Israel across, affirming Joshua’s leadership and officially crossing into the Promised Land.

Joshua 3:13 (ESV) And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.

APP: In the **STORY**, the “land” is a shadow of the “Kingdom” and Joshua is a shadow of Jesus. For Joshua and Jesus is really the same name: *Yeshua*, meaning “God’s salvation.” Through Jesus, our “Greater Joshua,” we have been given an inheritance that is already secured in Christ’s victory over sin and death! As the apostle Peter wrote:

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an **inheritance** that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Church, the land was not ultimately won by Israel’s swords—it was given by God’s sworn promise. And in the same way, our eternal inheritance is not secured by our effort but by the finished work of Jesus Christ, our greater Joshua.

2. The demonstration of a Sabbath Rest.

EXP: (44) “Rest on every side.” This doesn’t mean there were no more Canaanites to fight (They’re still around in Judges), but it means the power of the enemy was broken. God provided a “Sabbath” for the nation.

“**Rest**” (44) (נָח, *nūah*) - to rest, settle down and remain.

“**Every side**” (44) (סָבִיב, *sābīb*) - places round about, circuit, round about; from every side.

“**Enemies**” (44) (אֹיֵב, *’ōyēb*) - enemy, foe (personal or national)

“**Withstood**” (44) (עָמַד, *’āmaq*) - to stand, remain, endure, take one’s stand

“**Into their hands**” (44) (יָד, *yād*) - a hand (the open one: indicating power, means, direction) control.

The Conquest

THE STORY #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - March 8, 2026 - Joshua 21:43-45

ARG: This rest was accomplished by carrying out God's judicial judgment on sin. Remember what God said when making His covenant with Abram:

Genesis 15:16 (ESV) And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

God mercifully delayed judgment for centuries, but ultimately judged the sins of the peoples of Canaan to protect and give rest to His people.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 (ESV) 16 But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

ILL: **The conquest of Jericho** (Josh 6). The Canaanite cultures practiced extreme evil, especially child sacrifice and ritual sexual practices. So Jericho represents God judging entrenched evil. Jericho was the first city conquered in the Promised Land. Like the firstfruits offering, it belonged entirely to God.

Many scholars notice that the fall of Jericho is built around the number seven: seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits on the final day. Seven often points to God's sacred time, going all the way back to creation and the Sabbath. The message seems clear: Victory came through the power of God

The conquest was not ethnic violence but divine judgment after centuries of patience. God was removing deeply corrupt cultures and protecting His covenant people. Yet even there we see mercy: Rahab believed and was saved. Ultimately Joshua points forward to Jesus, who defeats not cities but sin, death, and Satan.

APP: The conquest shows us that God judges evil, but the cross shows us that Jesus bore that judgment so that sinners like us could be saved. Through Joshua, God gave Israel "rest on every side," but through Jesus, God offers true Sabbath rest:

Hebrews 4:8-9 (ESV) 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God

Matthew 11:28-29 (NKJV) 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

We live in the "Already/Not Yet." Jesus has conquered Sin and Death (the ultimate enemies), giving us "rest for our souls." Yet, we still battle our "Canaanite" idols. This points us to the fact that true rest isn't a place, it's a Person. Jesus is our Sabbath Rest.

3. The demonstration of a **Sufficient Word**.

EXP: (45) This is the "mic drop" of the book. "Not one word... failed." Literally "not one word fell to the ground." Every "jot and tittle" of God's covenant was upheld. The Hebrew emphasizes God's reliability and power to bring His promises to completion. Joshua is looking back over centuries of waiting, wandering, and warfare to declare: God's Word is sufficient and unstoppable!

"Not one word" (45) (דָּבָר, *dābār*) - speech, word, speaking; utterance

"Good promises" (45) (טוֹב, *ṭōb*) - good, agreeable. Promises is *dābār* again so literally "good words."

"Failed" (45) (נָפַל, *nāpāl*) - to fall, lie, be cast down, fail. Literally "not one word fell to the ground."

"All came to pass" (45) (בּוֹא, *bō'*) - to bring in, cause to come in, to bring to pass. "Joshua 21:45 is the interpretive key to the entire conquest narrative, especially when modern readers struggle with unfinished conquest in Judges. The point is not geographic exhaustiveness but covenant faithfulness." — Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*

The Conquest

THE STORY #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - March 8, 2026 - Joshua 21:43-45

ARG: God always keeps His Word. And His Word always accomplishes what He intends.

Numbers 23:19 (ESV) God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV) So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

ILL: **The Sun stood still** (Josh10). When God promised Israel victory over the Amorites, the battle seemed impossible. But Joshua prayed: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon” (Josh 10:12). And God answered: the sun and moon literally stopped in the sky until Israel finished the battle (Josh 10:13).

This miracle illustrates the sufficiency of God’s Word. He promised victory, and nothing...not armies, not the limits of time, not the natural order of creation... could prevent Him from keeping His Word.

Joshua saw firsthand that God does whatever it takes to fulfill His promises, and the “sun standing still” serves as a vivid reminder that God’s Word is sufficient and unstoppable.

APP: In THE STORY, Joshua’s testimony points forward to Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises. As the apostle Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NLT) For all of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!” And through Christ, our “Amen” (which means “Yes”) ascends to God for his glory.

Every promise—redemption, forgiveness, restoration, eternal life—finds its fulfillment in Christ.

Church, just as not one promise failed in Joshua’s day, not one promise will fail in Christ. Our victory, our inheritance, our rest is already secured by His Word.

CONCLUSION: Today we’ve seen three demonstrations of God’s faithfulness in the story of the conquest:

- **A Secured Inheritance** – God gave the land He promised, showing that His covenant is trustworthy. Just as Israel did not earn the land, we cannot earn our inheritance; it is secured in Jesus Christ, our Greater Joshua.
- **A Sabbath Rest** – God broke the power of Israel’s enemies so that His people could rest. True rest is not just a place or a pause from labor—it is found in Jesus, who offers rest for our souls.
- **A Sufficient Word** – Not one promise of God failed. Even when battles seemed impossible, God’s Word accomplished what He intended. Our hope is in Christ, who fulfills every promise of redemption and eternal life.

So what does this mean for us today? It means that we do not need to rely on our own strength, our own plans, or our own timing. God is faithful. He keeps His Word. He secures our inheritance. He gives us rest. And He fulfills every promise He has made through His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you are weary, if you are discouraged, if life feels like a wilderness or a battlefield, remember: God is faithful. He has done it before, and He will do it again. He has promised salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life through Christ and not one word of that promise will ever fail.

Let us respond by trusting, resting, and obeying. Trust His promises, rest in His provision, and step forward in faith knowing that the battle is already won in Christ. Let us live in the confidence of God’s faithfulness today and every day.

Let’s pray.