

# Refracting Holy War

Understanding Divine Action  
Through the Lens of Divine Character

# The Theological Dissonance.



## Our foundational concept of God

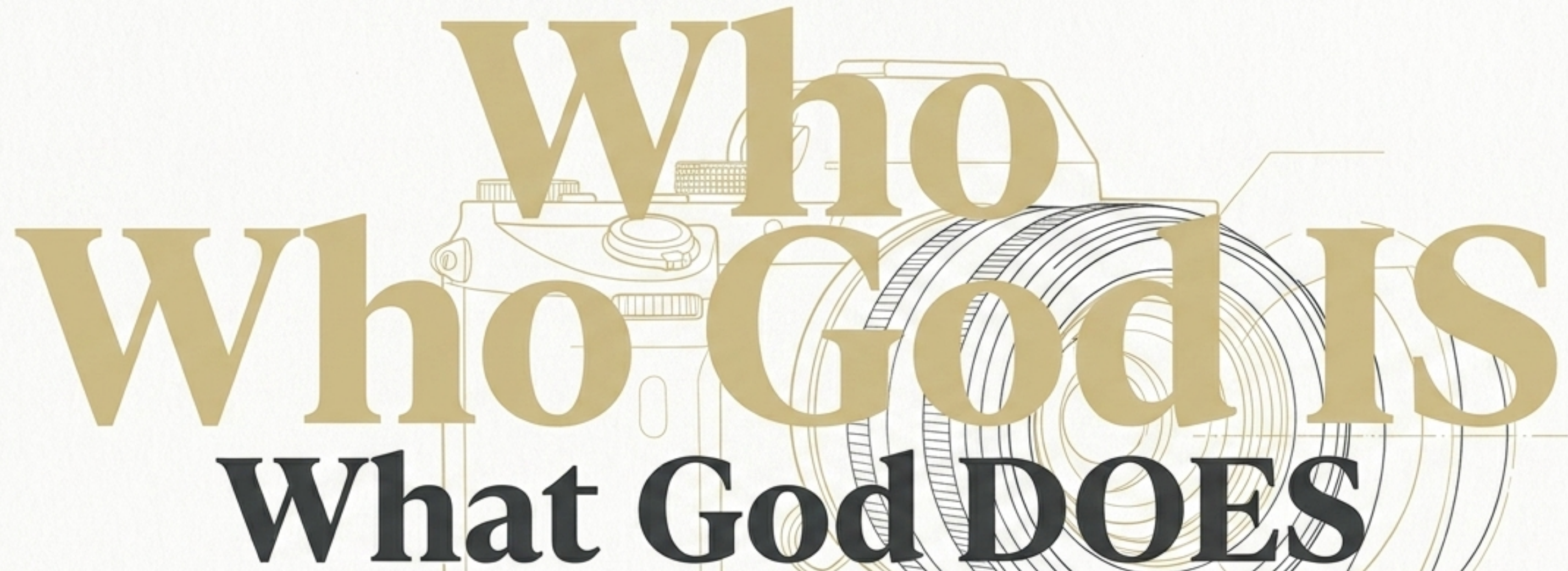
A loving, gracious creator.



## The reality of Old Testament conquest

Nations destroyed.  
Harsh judgment.  
Holy war.

How do we reconcile a God of grace with a God who commands the destruction of nations?



# Who God IS

## What God DOES

Before we can reconcile the history of the Canaanite conquest, we must first understand the nature of the Conqueror. When we know what God is like, we are equipped to understand His actions in history.

# The Border of the Promised Land.

Israel receives final instructions from Moses before entering the land (Deuteronomy 7:1-11).

**Defeat them...  
completely destroy them...  
make no treaty.**

**Perfect  
Justice**

**Sovereign  
Love**

**Unbreakable  
Faithfulness**

# Pillar I: Perfect Justice.

Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars... (Deuteronomy 7:5)



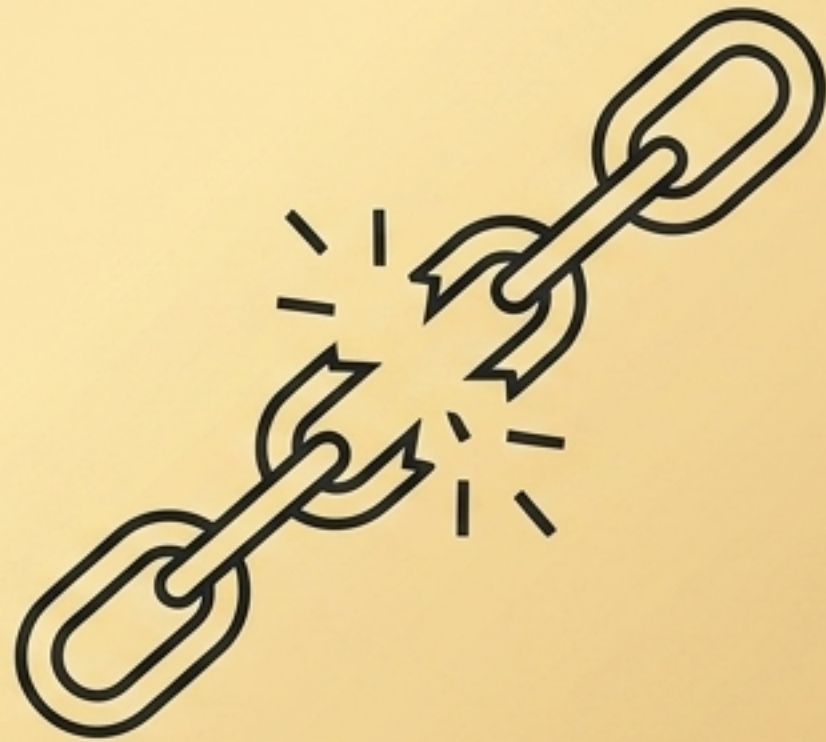
**The Crime:** The land was occupied by cultures demanding dehumanizing practices: child sacrifice, bestiality, and ritual prostitution.

**The Verdict:** Completely destroy them (Deut. 7:2) points to an offering to God—an act of holy war to remove idolatrous religion.

**The Question:** Would you want a passive God who winks at evil?

# Pillar II: Sovereign Love.

But because the LORD  
loved you...  
(Deuteronomy 7:8)



#### The Rescue:

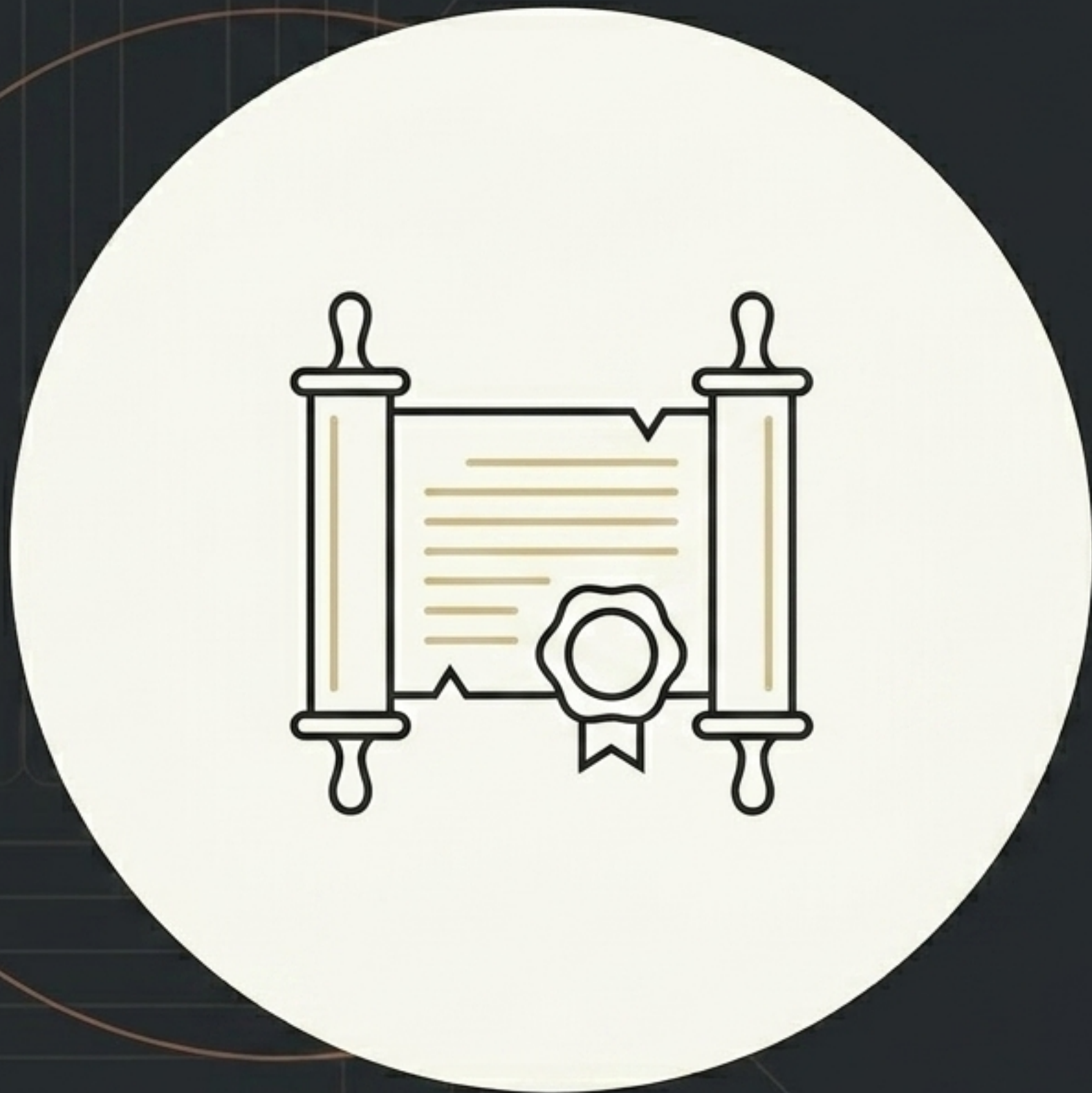
God's love created Israel, rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.

#### The Motivation:

He loved them just because. Not because of their size or power, but out of pure volition.

#### The Parallel:

Just as God showed special favor to Israel then, Ephesians 1 notes He blesses the church with every spiritual blessing out of pure love today.



## Pillar III: Unbreakable Faithfulness.

“Know that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant...” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

**The Guarantee:**  
God is not a man, that he might lie... Does he speak and not act? (Numbers 23:19).

**The Promise:**  
God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them this specific land (Exodus 6:8).

**The Execution:**  
The impending invasion is the absolute certainty of God keeping His historical promise.

# The Tripartite Lens of Divine Character



The destruction of the Canaanite nations sits at the exact intersection of these three absolute attributes. Remove any one of them, and the event becomes incomprehensible.

# Contextualizing the Conquest



## Linguistic Reality

Completely destroy was a common hyperbolic idiom in ancient Near Eastern war language. The historical reality is that nations were dispossessed of power, not entirely annihilated.



## Historical Reality

God withheld judgment for hundreds of years (Genesis 15:16), demonstrating extreme patience before executing justice on justice on cultures that harmed the vulnerable.



## Redemptive Reality

Clearing the land preserved Israel from assimilation. No preserved Israel means no Jesus Christ.

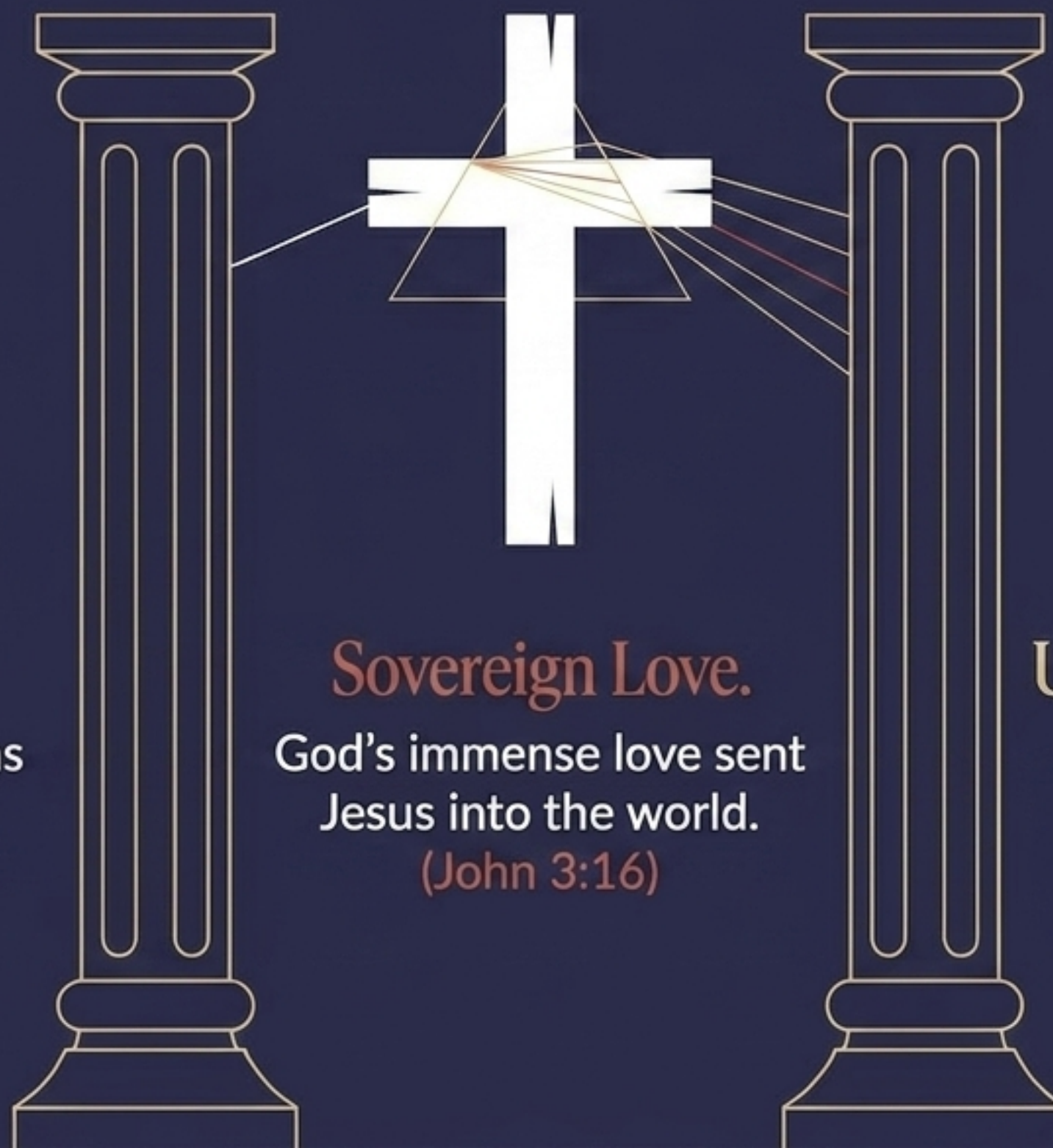


One More Thing...  
1,400 years after Israel crossed into Canaan,  
God waged another Holy War.

# The Cosmic Holy War

Dimension	1400 BC (Canaan)	33 AD (The Cross)
The Battlefield	A specific strip of land	The entire universe
The Enemy	Human nations	Sin and the Devil
The Weapon	Swords and spears	Christ's sacrifice on the Cross
The Beneficiaries	The nation of Israel	The worldwide church (everyone who turns to Jesus)

# The Prism Applied to the Cross



## Perfect Justice.

God's absolute justice was satisfied at the Cross.  
(Romans 3:21-26)

## Sovereign Love.

God's immense love sent Jesus into the world.  
(John 3:16)

## Unbreakable Faithfulness.

God's faithfulness saved us and gathered us into the church, His holy possession.  
(1 Peter 2:9-10)



## Character dictates Action.

History is messy, violent, and difficult to comprehend. But when the blinding light of historical events is passed through the prism of God's perfect justice, love, and faithfulness, the ultimate picture is not one of destruction, but of cosmic redemption.