



### Preaching about Jesus from the Book of Joshua

Rob Toornstra, pastor of Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church in Salem, Oregon, taught at a Christ-Centered Preaching conference at Kiev Regional Bible College in Ukraine on the book of Joshua. He spoke with ITEM newsletter editor Matt Crossman.

ITEM: How did you teach about Christ centered preaching through the book of Joshua?

Toornstra: The pastors who participate in this conference preach through a Christ-centered lens. I put up a picture of a mosaic. And I talked about how a mosaic is made up of thousands of individual pieces. I used one of those photo mosaics - where the whole photo is made up of small photos. I equated that to the Bible. The whole Bible is a big picture made up of little individual pictures.

When we read the Bible, we're being most faithful to Scripture when every book and even every passage is connected to that overall message of Scripture - the message of Christ.

ITEM: What is the Christ-centeredness of Joshua?

Toornstra: That's a good question. Big picture, you can start by looking at comparisons. The name Joshua is the Hebrew name of Jesus. And so right

away that kind of tips you off that there's probably a connection.

Joshua leads this conquest into the land God had promised in order to give rest to the people. Big picture, that's very close to what Jesus does. Jesus leads our march into the promised land by destroying the powers of sin and death in order to give us true and greater rest in himself. So that's kind of looking at both the work of Jesus and the work of Joshua from 35,000 feet.

ITEM: What do people in Ukraine bring to the book of Joshua, that's either good or bad? Or do they even know the Book of Joshua?

Toornstra: Their familiarity with Biblical text is actually pretty strong. In fact, I would say North American Christians can learn a lot from our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. They know and love God's word; they are familiar with the story. Probably more so than many people in an American context would.

There's no real problem with Biblical illiteracy. But what we run into is moralism. Take the lesson and ask, what does God want you to do? And that's it.

The other related approach that many Ukrainians, I think, and many others, take is character imitation. Here's Joshua, he was brave, be like Joshua. Many sermons and teaching tend to follow that mindset. And, you know, in a way, it's an easy way to default in preaching. It's a fairly simple approach, but it's probably not faithful to the Biblical text.

#### How to Contribute

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When John was a missionary in Australia, he taught for ITEM in Indonesia. His lectures equipping pastors for ministry continue from South Carolina. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17. He survived by Hermie, their two sons, daughters-in-laws and grandchildren. Dr. Joseph Hall was a “bulldog” for the Reformed faith. He loved books, teaching, and most of all, Jesus his Savior.

## Butler Probes Significance of the Bible in Last Days

*By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director*

Rising at 4:30 a.m. to attend and teach in an international webinar was a much better option than flying more than 30 hours to teach in person. Rev. John Owens Butler did not have to make this choice. Travel to Indonesia is not possible currently due to COVID19 pandemic restrictions. Doing a webinar was also a great option to reach hundreds of participants who are scattered over 17,000 islands in the archipelago nation.

Over 300 people attended the webinar entitled, “Significance of the Bible In the Last Days” held April 21-22. John participated from his home in Abbeville, SC. Most participants were from Indonesia, but some joined from Malaysia and the Philippines.

Because the majority of people in the webinar have studied English, John lectured without a translator. His lectures were on the Inspiration of Scripture. He taught how and why we can trust the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and how we should handle the Scriptures. During the question-and-answer sessions, the students’ questions showed they grasped what he said, that they understood. Occasionally, some points were clarified in Indonesian.

A downside to doing a webinar is the screen fatigue students experience from concentrating on a screen for hours. Another unfortunate reality was the webinar was limited to two days because for many students, they ran out of data on their mobile “pay as you go” plans and could not afford too much time online.

John thought the webinar went well. Feedback on the Inspiration of Scriptures was extremely positive. Another similar webinar is in the works for the fall, and he’s looking forward to teaching that one, too.

## Prayer Requests

1. For an online discipleship module that will be taught in May by Rev. Will Hesterberg and Rev. Gerson Cruz to students throughout Latin America through Seminario Reformado Latinoamericano in Cochabamba.
2. For the COVID19 pandemic to be brought under control in India, where it is having a disproportionate impact on poor people. Most Christians in India are from the “untouchables” caste. They are discriminated against and have very low incomes.
3. For All Nations College, which is in a county in Kenya under an extreme lockdown due to COVID19. Rev. Abraham Kogo from MINTS was scheduled to teach for ITEM, but he had to postpone because he could not enter Thika.
4. For Dr. Warren Lammer’s wife, Jobje and Dr. Jeff Richards’ wife, Debbie and their health struggles.
5. For Tom Smith as he teaches in Ethiopia and Uganda from May 11-30. While there, he will investigate both places as new fields for ITEM.
6. For wisdom and unity for the ITEM Board meeting on May 7.
7. For the families of Daniel Muindi and Joe Hall as they grieve their losses.

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