

JOSHUA BIBLE STUDIES

CONQUERING: JOURNEYING WITH JOSHUA

LESSON #7

JOSHUA CHAPTER 6

APPROPRIATING THE LAND - OR - "THE FALL OF THE WALL"

President Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Joshua stood at the Jericho Wall and said, "God is going to tear down this wall!" The record of the destruction of the wall of Jericho is in Joshua chapter 6. Jericho was in for quite a shake-up! Let us look at this event as follows:

I. THE MAMOUTH OBSTACLE. Joshua 6:1

Jericho is said by archeologists to be one of the oldest known cities in the world. Jericho had stood many tests over many centuries. Consider:

A. Jericho's Situation.

It was situated on the Easternmost side of Canaan and just West of the Jordan River. It was a fortress that protected against any threat to the heartland of Canaan. Its location, from the Canaanites perspective, was of great importance. Jericho was the greatest man-made obstacle the Israelites would face.

It was about 8 miles from where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea and 5 miles East of the Jordan River. Over the course of history there have been three different Jericho sites, all in the same area and located near each other

Jericho was a fortress. Militarily, it stood guard against any encroachment by nomadic tribes from the Sinai Peninsula. If Jericho could not be taken, Israel would always be looking back over their shoulders. They must overcome here if they were to be victorious in occupying the land of Canaan.

B. Jericho's Size.

Jericho was located on a mound 1,200 ft. long which encompassed approximately 8 acres. The mound was 50 feet. in height.

"The walls were of the type which made direct assault practically impossible. An approaching enemy first encountered a stone abutment, eleven feet high, up from which sloped a 35 degree plastered embankment reaching to the main wall some 35 vertical feet above. The steep, smooth slope prohibited battering the wall by any effective device or building fires to break it. An army trying to storm the wall found difficulty in climbing the slope, and ladders to scale the wall could find no satisfactory footing. The normal tactics used by an enemy to take a city so protected was siege, but Israel did not have time to this, if she was to occupy all the land." (Dr. Leon Wood in "Survey of Israel's History")
"A massive six-foot thick wall was erected on the edge of the mound. The inner wall was separated from it by a space of from 12 to 15 feet and was itself

12 feet thick.” (Merle Unger in “Archeology And The Old Testament”)

On top of the wall were houses, (Josh.2:15) making the height of the wall and houses about 30 feet .

As to its population, scholars estimate that at least 10,000 people lived in and around Jericho. Certainly it was a formidable fortress.

II. **THE MOBILIZATION ORDER.** Joshua 5:13 through 6:5

Given the situation, size and strength of Jericho, how then could Israel overthrow this humanly impregnable fortress? This is where the story gets interesting!

We must go back to the closing verses in chapter five. Joshua went out to contemplate the coming battle for Jericho and to formulate his battle plans. But God had it all planned out. Here is what happened:

A. **The Messenger That Joshua Meets.** Joshua 5:13-15

Joshua was suddenly confronted by “the Captain of the hosts of the Lord.” (5:14) The appearance of this Warrior with a drawn sword is a “*theophany*” – a “*theophany*” is an appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

The One who appeared here as “Captain of the hosts of the Lord” appeared to Moses in a burning bush. Joshua’s response was that he fell on his face like Moses at the burning bush. He understood the identity of the One before him and Joshua submitted his leadership to Christ’s Lordship!

All God’s people should be aware that we are in a holy war as described in Ephesians chapter 6. The battle is the Lord’s. We need to say with Joshua, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” (Josh.5:14b) Those know best how to command who know first how to obey!

The Captain then told Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.” Although Joshua was Israel’s human captain, the “Captain of the hosts of the Lord” was now on the scene and preparing to lead His people in conquering Jericho and Joshua worshiped. The lesson? Worship precedes warfare! Is that the posture of our lives?

B. **The Mandate That Joshua Receives.** Joshua 6:2

“And the LORD said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”

Never has the captain of an army been more assured of victory than Joshua was! But wait, you and I have the same guarantee of victory in our spiritual warfare: “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Rom.8:37) And, “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:57)

C. The Maneuvers That Joshua Is Given. Joshua 6:3-5

The instructions that Joshua received were by no means normal military strategies. Here they are:

1. Armed soldiers were to lead the procession and march around the walls. v.9
2. Then seven priests carrying trumpets were to follow next in line. v.9
3. The priests were followed by those carrying the Ark of the Covenant. v.9
4. Then another group of armed soldiers was to follow the Ark. v.9
5. This parade was to go around the city once on days one through six. v.11
6. On the 7th day the procession was to go around seven times. v.15
7. After the 7th time around the trumpets were to be blown as the signal for all the army to shout – and the walls of the city would fall down flat. v.20

This battle plan had to be of God for no human strategist would have conjured up such an illogical military maneuver! However, even more amazing than the plan is the fact that the people obeyed these weird instructions! They must have known that this is what God told them to do and they must have had great faith.

This in itself is a remarkable thing, for the orders were so contrary to human reasoning that we can imagine some of the people arguing and even refusing to obey. However, that is not the case for their obedience was immediate, enthusiastic and in complete compliance with the instructions. They did not deviate from the divine plan of action.

Just so, Christ wants us to carry out His program and plan for His church in the exact same way – with obedience, zeal and whole-hearted participation.

What happened next is still discussed today, both by people of doubt and people of faith. What happened?

III. THE MIGHTY OVERTHROW. Joshua 6:6-27

“Joshua fit the battle of Jericho” says the old song. But that is not entirely true. On the day when Jericho was captured, no arrow was shot, no spear was thrown and no sword was drawn until the enemy’s fortifications were demolished. Notice the record of the downfall:

A. The Destruction Of Jericho. Joshua 6:6-21

In order to understand how that happened we must not forget that “the Captain of the hosts of the Lord” was present and if the Captain was there the heavenly troops were there! God’s unseen army pushed the walls down! To borrow a phrase from Matthew 21:42 - “This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes.”

The people of Jericho had known about the God of Israel for 40 years. They had heard of all that He had done to the Egyptians because of their sins. They

knew what had happened to all who opposed Israel while on their wilderness journey. They knew about the miracle at the Jordan River. Furthermore, the people had 7 days to repent while Israel was marching around the city.

Rahab knew and repented but not so with the other inhabitants. The citizens of Jericho put their trust in the strength and height of their walls. Chapter 5 tells us that “Jericho was tightly shut up because of the sons of Israel” (v.1) and 6:1 says, “no one went out and no one came in.” Evidently they believed that they could hide from God behind their man-made fortifications. Foolish? Yes! But how common it is for men and women to believe that they can stone-wall God and wall Him out God from their lives.

The fall of the wall was the result of Joshua and his army cooperating with God and His army. The sudden falling of the walls becomes easily credible to anyone who believes in the personality of God and in His power. Remember what Hebrews 11:30 says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.” Faith in Whom? And, whose faith? Here is seen the Divine-human cooperative!

In every era the people of God are confronted by obstacles that seem impossible to surmount. This is nothing new. Neither is it new for God to intervene. Let us take courage and believe and obey God and thereby become overcomers. Listen to what 1 John 5:4 says, “this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.” This amazing story continues with:

B. The Deliverance Of Rahab. Joshua 6:22-25

Rahab and the members of her family who responded to her warning of coming judgment were spared. This was nothing but another miraculous development, for, you see, her house was built upon the wall (2:15). When the walls fell did her house crumble? No! Isn't that interesting? (When God sent the plague of hail upon the Egyptians, none fell on Israel - Ex. 9:26)

Before Joshua and his army moved on from Jericho they burned the city after Rahab and her family were safely taken out. (6:22-24) A picture of the church being taken from this world before God sends the judgment of fire.

There is one more interesting note about Rahab in v.25 “she dwells in Israel to this day.” At the time of the writing of the book of Joshua, many years later, she was still living with the Israelites. Pure grace! One last thing that we should take note of:

C. The Declaration Of Judgment. Joshua 6:26

God put a special curse on the city of Jericho and upon any who would rebuild it.. Read about it in I Kings 16:34.

I have led tours to Israel and have been to the ancient “tell” or mound of Jericho. It is an uninhabited pile of rubble. I have several “potsherds” in my office from the

site. On one tour I had an archeologist with me and he pointed out that when the walls fell they fell outward! Joshua's army did not push the walls inward – God's army pushed them outward!

SOME PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE FALL OF JERICHO

1. God keeps His promises. See Joshua 1:2-6.
2. The greatest battles are won on our knees. Let us bow before we battle! (5:14)
3. Those who doubt don't get to shout!
4. No man can take a city by himself. All the people marched.
5. No one can "stone-wall" God without paying the price!
6. Even in judgment God's grace is at work for Rahab and her family were saved.
7. "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (II Cor. 10:4-5)

SOME PRECIOUS TRUTHS ABOUT FAITH'S OPERATION

Hebrews 11:30 says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down."

1. **Faith is simple in its activity.** Faith is neither complex or difficult. It is simply believing and acting upon what God says. Think about this: Jericho was an impregnable fortress; it had not been overthrown in the past. God said walk, blow & shout! Can anything be more simple than that?
2. **Faith may seem foolish.** Yes, the wisdom of God is foolishness to the unbelieving. (See II Kings 5:10-14 – seven ducks in muddy water!) The way God told Joshua to attack Jericho was contrary to all human reasoning. But remember Isaiah 55:8-9 – "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, "says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts".
3. **Faith always tests our trust.** It must have been a severe test of their trust to silently walk and not talk as they circled the wall. (Joshua 6:10) No shouting – yet! No talking back to the Jerichoites up on the walls hurling insults down at the Israelites! Their silence must have innerved the citizens of Jericho!
6. **Faith's reward never disappoints.** It must have been hard to walk and wait for 7 days. God could have destroyed the walls the first day. However, remember: waiting on God is never time wasted! The faith way is God's way.

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