

Joshua Chapter 6 – The Battle for Jericho

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. ² And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. ³ You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. ⁴ And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him." ⁶ Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." ⁷ And he said to the people, "Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the LORD." ⁸ So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD advanced and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. ⁹ The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. ¹⁰ Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout." ¹¹ So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp. ¹² And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. ¹³ Then seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. ¹⁴ And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days. ¹⁵ But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city! ¹⁷ Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ¹⁸ And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD." ²⁰ So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. ²¹ And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. ²² But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." ²³ And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. ²⁶ Then Joshua

charged *them* at that time, saying, “Cursed *be* the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.” ²⁷ So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

Introduction

The conquest of Canaan was accomplished by 3 military campaigns. There was the central, the southern and the northern. The central campaign consisted of two battles, one at Jericho and the other at Ai.

The first battle to take Jericho was the most important one. Jericho was a key city in a strategic location adjacent to the river Jordan. If Jericho was conquered it would send a message of warning to the whole of the land and it would add a big psychological boost to Israel in the early stages of this Holy war against sin.

Before we deal with the battle we do need some historical background.

Let us turn first to Genesis 15: v. 13-16.

¹³ Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”

The implication in v. 16 is that God was being patient with the present inhabitants of the land. When their sins had reached the limit, God would use Abraham’s descendants to bring judgment upon them.

This is confirmed in Lev. 18: v. 24-27

²⁴ ‘Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. ²⁵ For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. ²⁶ You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you ²⁷ (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled),

Quote Deut. 9: v. 4-5.

⁴ “Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is driving them out from before you. ⁵ *It is* not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God was about to use, the not perfect Israel as an instrument for His judgment.

The conquest of Canaan was not gross injustice but the highest and most patient of God's justice.

All sin is against God and God must punish sin.

It is important that we see both sides of God's Character. Yes God is a God of love, He shows His love in sending His only Son Jesus Christ to this sin sick world in order to be punished for the sins of the world. This enables people to be rescued by God's Grace if they believe in the work that God's Son Jesus Christ did on the cross. If people refuse God's love then they receive the consequences of that rejection.

The nations in Canaan had rejected the Israelite God, who was Almighty God, maker of Heaven and Earth.

Let us now look at the text of chapter 6.

1. God speaks to Joshua – v. 1-5.

We discovered last week that God was the commander of the Israelite army, therefore it was not unusual that God should give Joshua instructions about how to conquer Jericho.

What was unusual was the type of instructions that God gave Joshua.

God told Joshua to march around the city with his soldiers for six days.

They were to carry the "Ark" around with them on each trip. Seven Priests were to have 7 trumpets of Ram's horns going before the "Ark".

On the seventh day they were told to march around the city in the same manner but they were to do it 7 times and the Priests were to blow their trumpets. When that happened the people had to cry out with a great shout, then the wall of the city would fall down flat.

If you were about to start a military campaign and you were Joshua, the words that you received from God on that day wouldn't make sense to you at all. However if you had just witnessed the parting of the river Jordan, and met Jesus on the road declaring to be the Commander of God's army, then you would have been encouraged to obey God's instructions however mad they may seem to you.

You really would have to believe what God said in v. 5 that by following all these instructions the wall would fall down flat, by the power of God.

Well Joshua believed by "Faith" in God's word and he then turned to his army and gave them the instructions that God had given him.

2. Joshua instructs the Priests and the army of God – v. 6-10.

Joshua called the Priests and told them to take up the "Ark of the Covenant" and instructed 7 Priests to have trumpets of Ram's horns in front of the "Ark".

The armed people were told to be in front of the "Ark".

Remember that the “Ark” represented the presence of God.

In v. 10 Joshua tells all the people not to make a sound with their voice as they marched around Jericho. That may have been a very difficult thing to do.

They were told that there would be a day and a time for them to shout, but until then they were to remain silent. God was teaching them patience. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent. (Eccl. 3:v. 7)

We notice that in the life of Jesus, especially when He was arrested and charged with Blasphemy.

3. The Battle for Jericho - v. 11-16, 20-21. – The Israelites followed Joshua’s instructions even though it may have seemed to them rather foolish. The text is very clear.

It tells us that they obeyed Joshua’s instructions very clearly. I am sure that many of the soldiers were keen to get on with the battle, but God was instructing them just to go on a prayer walk around Jericho.

The devil is always in a hurry but God has got plenty of time. He was doing something in the lives of His people over this week. He was preparing them to trust 100% in both God and their leader Joshua.

4. Instructions concerning the accursed things and the Jewels – v. 18-19 - The Israelites were given instructions concerning the accursed things and the silver and gold and bronze and iron. Although the culture of the day would allow people to take something from the battle for themselves, Joshua told them that they were to take nothing for themselves. It is God’s battle and it was going to be God’s victory. This was God’s battle and only He would get the Glory.

Psalm 115:v.1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.

Isaiah 42: v. 8 I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

Joshua 6:18 “Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel.”(N.L.T.)

5. The Salvation of Rahab and her family v. 22-23, 25. – The two men who spied out the land in chapter 2 were instructed to rescue Rahab and everybody who was in her house. They kept their part of the agreement, and Rahab kept her part of the agreement to tie a scarlet cord in her window.

Application for us today

1. The Instructions given to Joshua. – v. 1-5.

Joshua did not take the city by a clever, human military tactic. The strategy was God’s strategy.

We must never forget that no situation or problem is too great for God to handle.

Read John 6: v. 4-14.

⁴ Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. ⁷ Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ⁹ "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" ¹⁰ Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." ¹³ Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Hudson Taylor the pioneer missionary to China said that there are 3 different ways to serve the Lord.

1. To make the best plans that we can and hope they succeed.
2. To make our own plans and ask God to bless them.
3. To ask God for His plans and then do what He tells us to do.

If we want to succeed in the battle of the Christian life then like Joshua we need to surrender to God. We need to ask for God's plans and then do what He tells us to do.

Many Christians make their own plans and ask God to bless them.

To ask God for His plans involves a full surrender of our life to God.

God's plans for the conquest of Jericho appeared to be foolish in man's eyes, but it worked.

God's wisdom is far above our wisdom.

Isaiah 55: v. 8-9

⁸ "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

God delights in using people and plans that seem foolish to the world.

1 Corinthians 1: v. 26-29

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The next thing that I want to look at is the number 7 in the instructions.

There were 7 Priests involved in blowing 7 trumpets of Ram's horns, they had to march round 7 times on the seventh day. The number 7 is clearly written into the life of Israel.

The Sabbath was celebrated on the seventh day, 7 weeks from Passover is Pentecost, the seventh year is the Sabbatical year and after 7 times 7 years they celebrate the year of Jubilee.

Three of Israel's feasts are celebrated in the seventh month. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

In Biblical theology the number 7 represents completeness and perfection.

The Hebrew word translated 7 is "shevah" which comes from a root to be full or to be satisfied.

In Gen 2: v. 3 when God finished his work of creation, he rested on the seventh day and sanctified it. This gave the number 7 its significance.

The Jews noticed that there were 7 promises in God's covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 12 v. 1-3) and there were 7 branches on the candlestick in the Tabernacle. (Ex. 37:17-24)

To the Jewish people anything involving the number 7 was sacred to them.

It spoke to them of God's ability to FINISH what He started.

So why is this relevant to us here at O.I.C. today.

Firstly God began the work of O.I.C. 41 years ago. It was God's idea to plant an International Church in Osaka. It is through God's help that it has continued over 41 years.

If you are a Christian today, then it tells us in Philippians 1:6 that God has begun a good work in you, and He will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

You may give up on God, but God will NEVER give up on you. He is always working in and through you for HIS GLORY.

I received a very encouraging letter this week from a member of my old Church. A little boy called Joshua who was only 8 years old at the time, put his faith and trust in Jesus in the toilets of our Church.

We had just built a new Church so the toilets were nice and clean.

When he got older he stopped coming to our children's club. However God did not give up on him and today he is preparing to go to Bible College to serve Jesus.

He has the advantage that his parents are Christians and they are fully supporting him.

May this encourage you to keep praying for someone you might know that appears to have fallen away.

2. The "Faith" of the Israelites as they obeyed God's instructions. V. 6-16

The writer to the Hebrews used the event of the destruction of Jericho as one of the "By Faith" examples in Hebrews 11. (11:v.30)

The fall of Jericho is an encouragement to God's people to trust His promises and obey His instructions, no matter how impossible the situation may appear to be.

We may not be called to do what Joshua had to do but we all face challenges in our everyday lives. We too have enemies and high walls that challenge us.

One commentator said "The only way to grow in faith is to accept new challenges and trust God to give you victory."

It was Philip Brooks who said "Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be better men and women. He also said, "Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for power equal to your tasks."

3. The Grace of God revealed in the safety of Rahab and her family – v. 22-23,v.25.

In v. 21 we are told that the Israelites utterly destroyed everything in the city. This included all the men, women and children and all the animals.

Only Rahab and her family were saved. This sounds to us on a human level that God is very cruel, why did He save only one family and destroy all the other families?

The answer is very simple. Only Rahab had "faith" in the Israelite God, the rest of Jericho wanted to "Fight" the Israelite God. They had the same opportunity to believe in the Israelite God, but those chose not to believe. They worshipped false gods and performed very sinful practices. They sacrificed children to their gods and performed perverted sexual practices. They could have repented of these sins like Rahab but they chose not to.

God was perfectly justified in destroying Jericho. God is not only a God of Love, but He is also a God of Justice and therefore He must punish sin. However by His Grace He has provided a way for us to escape His wrath. He sent the Lord Jesus from Heaven to take the punishment for our sin. If we believe that in our heart and repent of our sin and put our full trust in Jesus, then like Rahab we will be saved from God's wrath upon us.

God is 100% Holy and we are not. God had to find a way of forgiving our sin without compromising His Holiness. The only way He could do that was to send His Son Jesus to take the punishment that we deserve.

If God speaks to your heart today, don't harden it towards Him.

Let us Pray.