

Conquering Strongholds

Joshua 6:1-27

Introduction

This one of the most famous chapters in all the Bible. We sing and celebrate the capture of Jericho. The chapter illustrates several powerful and practical spiritual truths. Remember our theme: **Victorious Christian Living. Every Christian faces powerful forces of darkness, opposition and obstacles.** We learn quickly that it is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His promises that help us overcome and defeat strongholds in our lives. In 1 John 5:4 we read “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith”. The writer of Hebrews appeals to this story (Hebrews 11:30-31) and says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. (31) By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”

We are instructed by the Commander Of The Lord’s Army (Jesus).

We are called to overcoming faith.

We are equipped and outfitted with spiritual weapons.

Our Captain The Lord of Hosts (vv.1-5)

In chapter 5 (vv.13-15) Joshua worships the Commander of the Lord’s Army acknowledging that it is His war and that the people of Israel were a part of the Lord’s army. The Lord has many titles but Lord of Hosts is His battle title, it speaks of His supreme authority, leadership of the hosts of heaven. Jesus had come to instruct and direct the battle—and you will note—Joshua was quick to concede authority and leadership to Him. **Where does victory begin?**

Warren Wiersbe rightly says; “. . .confess you are second in command. There can be no victory for the Lord in public unless we experience worship of the Lord in private. Joshua fell on his face in worship; he took off his shoes in humility; and he turned all his plans over to his Commander when he said, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” As soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:10ff), we must submit to Christ and listen to His orders in the Word. Christ gave to Joshua the exact orders for overcoming the city (6:2-5), and all he had to do was obey by faith” (see Wiersbe’s *Expository Outlines of the Old Testament*; p. 215).

Joshua 6:1–27 (NKJV)

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

Jericho was a fortified city. But her gates and walls served not simply as protection from outside forces. The walls served to keep her citizens inside as candidates for judgement. The walls would not keep Israel out. Fear of the Jews kept the city locked up and barricaded.

The city is 800 feet below sea level. It was a doomed city.

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There are ultimately things that are destined for judgment and things destined for salvation.

Jericho was doomed because it was located in an area that was set aside for the Lord and His people. It may be hard to understand—but now God was going to allow the rightful occupants to inherit what belonged to them.

William MacDonald writes; “Many things in our lives loom out as Jerichos, impeding our progress in possessing our possessions. Perhaps we’ve been discouraged with the sheer immensity of our trials. If we will only claim the victory the Lord give and move ahead in faith, with eyes fixed upon God for success, we too will see miracles” (p.245).

2And the Lord said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.

3You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.

4And 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.

5It 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.”

Capture And Defeat The City (vv.6-25)

Victory or defeat?

What are some of the things we can glean from Israel’s victory over the city?

- 1. The people listened to the Word of God and obeyed it (vv.6-9).**
- 2. The people exercised patience and faith (vv.10-14).**
- 3. The people trusted the Lord to do the impossible (vv.15-16).**

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4. The people obeyed the Lord in the details (vv.17-25).

6Then 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."

You should note that the ark of the covenant is mentioned seven times between verses 6-12.

7And he said to the people, "Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the Lord."

8So 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.

9The 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.

10Now 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."

11So 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.

12And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

13Then 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.

14And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days.

15But 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.

16And 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!"

17Now 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.

The city was cursed. Doomed. No one was too be saved except Rahab and those in her house.

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18And 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.

19But 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.”

20So 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.

Some have suggested this is the first mention of psychological warfare in the Bible.

Dr. John Davis writes; “A single march around the nine-acre mound area probably took twenty-five to thirty-five minutes. It should not be concluded that every Israelite took part in this march. Such a feat would not only be impractical, but would be impossible. It is more probable to assume that the march was carried out by tribal representation (*Conquest and Crisis p. 45*).

21And 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.

The command to “utterly destroy” has caused no end of discussion and debate.

People argue how could a good and loving God order such a thing?
Which is it love and grace or judgment and wrath? The right answer must include both.

Does the Lord God of Heaven—the Creator of Heaven and Humans have a right to do as He pleases?

And there’s the rub. **Human beings accuse or criticize God for administering deserved judgment on the wicked. They are willing for a moment to marvel at love or grace. It is both love and grace that preserve Rahab and her family from their deserved punishment.**

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We know that when a culture, a nation, or a person reaches a certain point of perversion—God reserves the right to judge swiftly and catastrophically.

God is holy and just. Many scholars attest to the depth of wickedness and perversion that the people of Canaan embraced. According to 1 Kings 14:24 the entire land was populated with perverts. “And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel”.

We know that the ‘perverted persons’ were the male prostitutes who were used in religious worship. In context the people of Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings 14:22) and provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree” (v.23).

The Lord wanted to keep the people of Judah as pure as possible for as long as possible. Jesus would be born of virgin. But what happens when a society to longer values chastity or sexual purity?

We’ve come full circle. You have friends who despise the God of the Bible and hate the Church of Jesus Christ. The Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be Christians but they were commanded to “lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well” (Acts 15:29).

22But 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.”

The faith that brought the walls down also brought Rahab’s family out of the place of certain judgment.

Again William MacDonald writes; “The grace of God not only made provision for her safety but also elevated her to a place in the ancestry of David and ultimately of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5-6). Grace not only saves us from destruction but also guarantees our exaltation (Rom. 8:29,30). Faith is the hand that takes hold of grace” (p.245).

23And 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.

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24But 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.

Think about it. Once Rahab and her family were safely taken from Jericho the city was burned with fire.

Everything and everyone in the city was to be destroyed. The only exception was the silver and gold and vessels of bronze and iron—which were to be placed in the treasury of the house of the Lord. **No one took anything for himself (see MacDonald p.245).**

25And 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.

The Curse On The City (vv.26-27)

26Then 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."

To whom is Joshua laying the charge? Could it be the people of Rahab's household? Just like some of the Jews were tempted to go back to Egypt—could it be that some of Rahab's household would be tempted to rebuild the city?

Jericho was doomed. Jericho was under the judgment of God. This is why God allows Joshua to pronounce a curse on the city.

The curse was literally fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34. During the reign of King Ahab—a man named Hiel of Bethany rebuilt Jericho. When he laid the foundation, he lost his firstborn son. When he established the gates—he lost his youngest son. Wiersbe points out that the prophecy was literally fulfilled—and at what cost. "How foolish people are to defy God's Word and rebel against His will! (see Wiersbe's Outlines p. 217).

The prophecy has three specifics: (1) the city would be rebuilt by one man; (2) the builder's oldest son would die when the work on the city was begun. (3) The builder's youngest son would die when the work was complete.

27So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

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Conclusion

Many Christians reserve the right to remain Lord over their lives. Is Jesus the Lord of your life?
Does your private worship inform your public walk?