



Lesson 2 March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Joshua Prophet of Conquest

Study Scripture – Joshua 5:13-6:5, 15-16, 20

Background Scripture – Joshua 5:13-6:27

### Key Verse:

*The Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor.*

**Joshua 6:2**

### INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that play into success in any kind of conflict, war or any arena of competing interests. The stakes are highest in armed conflict as what is most precious, human lives are lost and even survival of nations hang in the balance. Thus, victory must be won, and a right strategy is the most crucial component to achieve this end. Force superiority is another important element to ensure victory. In both of these vital areas it appears from the human perspective that Israel was wanting; however, the 'Captain of the Lord's Army' was on their side.

Joshua was confirmed as the leader of Israel following the death of Moses '*the man of God*'. God's faithful servant had ensured a smooth transition and succession Moses having trained Joshua as his assistant in the past how many years. Joshua himself had shown a love and commitment to the Lord, a necessary qualification for any who desire to serve God and His people.

*And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.* (Ex.33:11; see Num.14:6-10).

Israel was at a critical juncture in its history. They had finally emerged from their wilderness wanderings. Only Joshua, Caleb and Moses of the generation that departed Egypt survived the trek; the rest were disciplined by God for their unbelief at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14).

Once again Israel consisting of people under 20 years of age were poised to enter the Promised Land, however they were immediately faced with the double challenge of crossing the flooded Jordan River and right behind it, the walled and fortified city of Jericho. Any entry into Canaan from the east must pass through Jericho. God miraculously provided a dry path across the flooded Jordan for the people to cross and confirmed Joshua as Moses' Successor to the people in this great miracle. The Ark of the Covenant featured prominently in the 'crossing' reminding the people of God's presence with His people.

The Israelites were now camped at Gilgal a few miles between Jericho and the Jordan but before the military campaign could begin to destroy Jericho and expel the other Canaanites from the land, there were important spiritual issues that had to be addressed. The people had to be consecrated in preparation for the great task that lay before them. They were excited

with miraculously crossing the Jordan; they apparently knew the enemy was in disarray and suffering from low morale (5:1). Many of the military leaders under Joshua's command must have thought this was the best time to attack Jericho.

However, in God's economy and plan there are spiritual values, priorities and principles that are far more vital and fundamental to victory than our capacity to attack and demolish the fortresses that the world has raised up against the knowledge and plan of God (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Before Israel was ready to face the enemy, they needed a preparation of heart and willingness to submit to God's directions that they might experience His power. To ensure victory, God took them through several events to instruct and prepare them for battle and these are instructive for Christians as we face our 'Jerichos'.

Our Lesson Study deals with an event and issues that have been much discussed. It is generally felt that this experience of Joshua teaches us much about the real values in our spiritual life. We might be anxious to do something we value greatly for God, but we should never forget that God prizes more than anything else that we **be** something for Him before He can allow us to do things for Him and to be victorious in our lives, for in truth and in fact the victory is the victory of God and not our victory. It is God who gives us the victory. Note therefore in verse 2 of this chapter the Lord was saying,

***"I have already given Jericho into your hand".***

This was before Joshua or Israel had done anything. They therefore were looking at a defeated city and walls which did not really exist. All they really had to do was to obey God, and claim the promise given.

In this event God is telling Joshua and ourselves that we really must know the promises of God. Believers must believe the promises of God that are found in the Word of God for all the words of God inform us of God's meaning. Joshua was told to focus on the word of God, listen to it, and follow it. One writer therefore points out four spiritual principles:

**"The first is that when God expresses himself in and through his people, the world takes notice.**

**Second, the spiritual preparation of God's people must precede any activity.**

**Third, God's people must be alert to change, because God won't always do things the same way. And fourth, God's people deserve and need leaders who are themselves being led by God, who are not self-directed".**

Note therefore the whole land reacted even before the people went into the land for God made sure that the Canaanites had heard about what He had done for Israel and they were demoralized.

Then, all the males were circumcised (5:2-9), a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and the identifying mark of those in the covenant community. Circumcision represented Israel's faith in God's promises which included the possession of the Land as their inheritance. It was an act of faith and spiritual preparation.

The Passover was observed (5:10) as Israel was to relive their deliverance from Egypt by the 'blood of the Lamb' and as with circumcision, this too was related to the Land. Observing the Passover in Egypt protected them from the destroying angel, it also assured them of two more things: (a) that just as the Red Sea crossing would be followed by the destruction of the Egyptians (b) so likewise the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by the defeat of the



Canaanites. Remembering the past became an excellent preparation of faith for the tests of the future.

They ate the produce of the land for the first time, and this marked the cessation of manna (5:11-12). Deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey (Deut. 8:8-9). Thus, eating of the produce was an act of confirmation of God's abundant blessing.

The strategy the Israelites used to attack Jericho resulted in a decisive and complete victory; unsurprisingly, no army since have used this approach which was unusual to say the least. The battles in which God's people are engaged invariably has a spiritual component and as a result our armament must go beyond the material, (Eph. 6:10-20). Our battle is not really against flesh and blood.

Some feel concern over God commanding the Israelites to annihilate the Canaanites. But remember the Canaanites were not some innocent primitive people but were immoral and debased on an unmatched scale and had tested God's patience for centuries. But God made sure that the Canaanites would have ample time to repent, and Israel would not inherit the land until the iniquity of the Amorites, a general word for the Canaanites, was filled to the brim and overflowing.

So God said in warning to Israel:

*When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. (Deut.18:9-10). But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full, (Gen.15:15).*

The Canaanite situation was typified in Sodom (Gen. 13:13). It had evolved for generations and now in Joshua's day God would no longer tolerate their existence. [Gen. 15:16]. They had had hundreds of years to repent after the witness of Melchizedek, Abraham and many other God-fearing people who had lived among them. They were a real and present danger to the spiritual well-being of God's people and God used Israel as His instrument of judgment on these Canaanite tribes.

The Study Text clearly reveals that God *hates* sin. However, the people He uses to fight sin must accept His standard of holiness for themselves. They must abandon themselves to His way of doing things and acknowledge that victories are the result of His might, not their own.

The fate of the Canaanites was a lesson to the Israelites; to remind them that their continued presence in the Land required among other things no engagement with the idolatry and occultic practices rampant in Canaanite culture.

It is a warning for Christians that God's work is to be done in God's way and in His power.

So first, the people of God always have to wait patiently, and be prepared in God's way.

Pay close attention to the matter of guilt and the matter of freedom. Both are related. The younger generation had to wait before they went into the Promised Land because of the sins of their fathers. But note that they did not seem to have a great deal of resentment. Maybe they understood that their parents had been afraid that if they took them straight into the Land the children would be destroyed for that was the excuse that the parents had given. But the parents were the ones who perished because of unbelief and it was the children that now would come into the Land because God guaranteed that He would take care of the children.



Parents despite their mistakes therefore should be reassured that if they do not understand or think carefully about, or not be repentant about what they are doing, things and actions which might turn out to be not totally correct, God would look after their children and the children would have to learn not to be bitter or resentful toward their parents. Parents therefore have to learn to know what God wants from them and to trust God and not simply live their lives the way they want. This of course is a struggle that many people have but be warned that this struggle and difficulty will delay your progress in your spiritual life.

Children have to remember that nothing your parents have done or can do will frustrate the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring you into the fullness of blessing. You therefore have to understand that as children of God bitterness must be replaced with love, compassion, and forgiveness. That is what God did to these children before He took them into the Promised Land.

But now, the children were faced with accepting the private and personal sign of the unique relationship that every person of God bore to God.

The New Testament tells us that circumcision signifies the cutting off of the flesh with its **old** life with its power of condemnation over us. So believers must understand as one writer puts it: **“The guilt and shame and disgrace and embarrassment of our past are gone; they have been cut off. The past no longer affects us, it cannot control, its former power is broken. The passage through the Jordan signifies the fact of our identification with Christ-- our being placed into his death, burial, and resurrection. Circumcision symbolizes the effect of that identification the talking off of the old life, and the placement into a new kind of relationship. Therefore, the event and the place where this event took place, are very important. They called the place Gilgal, “rolling away”, because it was there that God “rolled away” the reproach of Egypt”.**

## THE TEXT

Verses 1-12 describe three very important activities the Israelite undertook preparatory to their attack on Jericho. The imminent conquest of Canaan was not simply to replace one people with another but rather a demonstration of God’s holy judgment and His faithfulness to His promises. Circumcision identified the Israelites as His covenant people, Passover reminded them of God’s protection and eating the produce of the land was a taste of the ‘fruitful’ land God promised.

The whole sequence, circumcision, Passover, and theophany emphatically declared that the Israel of conquest was the Israel of Exodus. The God who had saved His people out of Egypt would now save them in Canaan." One writer notes:

**“The conquest of Canaan is too often treated as an enterprise of the Israelites, carried out with great cruelties, for which they claimed divine sanction. The Old Testament presents the matter in an entirely different light. The war is a Divine enterprise, in which human instruments are employed, but so as to be entirely subordinate to the Divine will”.**

### **Chapter 5:13-15**

Verse 13. *Jericho* ... the city was located about ten miles northwest of the Dead Sea and five miles west of the Jordan River. Cities of antiquity were sited with three concerns in mind: access to water, access to trade routes, and defensibility. Jericho had all the best of the three.



Because of nearby springs of water, the city was an oasis in the dry Jordan landscape. Jericho was also a strategic place to begin conquest of Canaan because of its proximity to trade routes. Jericho depended on its walls for defense, a focus of this lesson. Its location was such that nobody would come into Canaan without passing through that city first. So it was all incredibly fortified. It was an imposing, impressive sight. The city was surrounded by suburbs and hamlets, houses and farms spreading through the countryside so that when the area was attacked by marauding armies everybody went into this walled city and they were safe. Do not forget that when the 12 spies first went into Canaan from Kadesh-Barnea nearly 38 years earlier according to Numbers 13 cities like Jericho frightened them and convinced them that they would never be able to conquer these rich and formidably defended cities of Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb so trusted God that they argued that these cities would be like butter in the hands of God. The 10 spies saw the 8-acre square of the walled city of Jericho surrounded by two high walls about 15 feet apart so they 10 spies thought it was impossible to capture such a place. So do you believe the promises of God? Do you trust God? Does the world frighten you? Do you believe the words of God are Yea and Amen? Is your perspective God's? Do you remember Matthew 16:18, ***The gates of hell will not prevail against you?*** The wall is so thick you wish it isn't so? Just remember the consequences of disbelief. But remember that of all the people in this apparently unbeatable city there was one woman named Rahab, a "liberated" woman, who with her family had caught the interest of God. She was in His heart.

*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho ...* the Israelite camp was at Gilgal a couple of miles east of Jericho and Joshua was on a reconnaissance mission. He wanted information about the city and its fortifications in preparation to launch his attack. He needed to devise a plan of attack, a strategy. Another great leader, Nehemiah, did the same when faced with the condition of the walls of Jerusalem

Despite Joshua's long military experience, he had never led an attack on a fortified city that was prepared for a long siege. In fact, of all the walled cities in Palestine, Jericho was probably the most invincible. There was also the question of armaments. Israel's army had no siege engines, no battering rams, no catapults, and no moving towers. Their only weapons were slings, arrows, and spears which were like straws against the walls of Jericho. The walls were of a type which made direct assault practically impossible. The normal tactic used by an enemy to take a city so protected was siege, but Israel did not have time for this, if she was to occupy all the land in any reasonable number of months."

*...and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand...* Joshua . . . behold a man was standing opposite him with his sword in his hand" We learn from this account that the man was an angel or a physical form of God (Theophany). The same imagery of an angel with a drawn sword is also in Num. 22:31 and 1 Chr. 21:16. Apparently, the drawn sword was to reassure Joshua that YHWH would fight for them (Deut. 1:30).

Note that this is a very frightening scene for Joshua was walking through the deserted streets outside of the walled city when suddenly a man appeared with a drawn sword. Joshua reacted as a warrior of God.

*Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?...* based on Joshua's initial reaction to the appearance of this armed *man*, there is no reason to think he looked extraordinary in any way. His dress did



not say Israelite or Canaanite. Joshua was uncertain as to the stranger's allegiance but was soon to learn the answer was not a simple "us" or "them"!

*Joshua went unto him...* Joshua moved towards this man; What a sign of bravery! He does not know if he is friend or foe. This old warrior was ready to fight any foe! Like old Jacob he would never back away from a fight.

Verse 14. *And he said, Nay...* this is understood in several ways: (1) "no" (NKJV); (2) "neither" (NRSV); or (3) 'indeed'.

*... as Captain of the host of the LORD ...* the man identified Himself as "the Captain (Prince) of the LORD's host" (i.e., the commander of God's angelic army).

*Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. (1 Kings 22:19)* (see 2 Kings 6:8-17; Matt. 26:53; Heb. 1:14).

The man's identifying himself as *captain* reinforces the military overtones of his unsheathed sword and the armed force at his command (1 Samuel 12:9).

*...host...* refers to (1) the 'army of heaven'; or (2) the heavenly bodies (stars, sun, moon, in past ages about astral worship). Here, in a military passage it would refer to the captain of the armies of YHWH.

*... am I now come ...* In other words, "I am here, not to take sides, but to take over as Commander of the Lord's Army." The stranger's response put everything in proper perspective. God is sovereign. It is never a question whether God is on our side but whether we are on God's side. ...

The purpose of this encounter was not to impart commands but to inspire Joshua with humility and reverence and to instill in him the confidence that God was with him and was in control (1:9).

The Lord had not come to execute Joshua's plans, but came to take over! It was not for Joshua to claim God's allegiance for his cause no matter how right and holy it might be. Rather, the need was for Joshua to acknowledge God's claim over him for God's purposes.

*Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship...* angels, as created beings, do not accept worship (Revelation 19:10; 22:8). Some see the posture of *worship* Joshua adopted may have been intended only in a sense of indicating great respect, as very similar language is translated in Ruth 2:10; 1 Samuel 25:23; and 2 Samuel 14:22. On the other hand others see this as a Theophany, a preincarnate appearance of Jesus.

*Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. (Judges 2:1).*

*... What saith my Lord unto his servant?...* realizing that such a man would not show up just to chit-chat, Joshua's question sought to get to the heart of the man's errand immediately.

Joshua's referring to himself as *servant* and to the man as *my lord* are two more indications of Joshua's great respect for this messenger sent by God and His submission to that leadership. The fall of Jericho, and the subsequent defeat of the Canaanite tribes, was a result of God's celestial hosts, His angelic army, not the Israelites. It was God's unseen warriors who brought down the walls of Jericho, not the shouts of the Israelites. God used the Israelites in these battles, but the victory was supernatural, not natural.





Verse 15. ...*Loose thy shoe from off thy foot* ... this command to which Joshua complied would have convinced him that this was the same Person, the LORD God Himself who appeared to Moses at the 'burning bush' (Exod. 3:5). Where God was, there was holiness, and where holiness was, there was a need for cleanness. It was as if heaven had come down to Earth and Joshua had to face the hosts of heaven which proper dignity.

Cleanness, rather than cleverness, is the prime condition of successful service. Moses went to investigate the bush (Exodus 3:3). Joshua went to check out the mysterious figure confronting him (5:13).

The strange confrontation of 5:13-15 resembles that between Jacob and the man of God at Peniel

(Gen. 32:22-32) and that between Moses and the burning bush (Ex. 3:1—4:17). In each case, the human encounters a divine messenger before facing a life-and-death conflict.

### **Joshua 6:1-5**

Verse 1. ... *was straitly shut up* ... emphasizes the fact that the city had strong fortifications.

... *none went out, and none came in...* this note interrupts the Captain's conversation with Joshua briefly (Joshua 5:15, It reveals in part the "defensibility" aspect of *Jericho*. The fact that *none went out, and none went in* speaks not only to the city's ability to control access but also to the reason for the heightened security measures: the threat posed by *the children of Israel*. Joshua had previously sent two spies into the city to assess the situation. Although they had gained entrance, one or more alert members of the populace had informed authorities not only of the intrusion itself but also where the spies were located. Under protection from Rahab, the spies learned that the city was in a state of panic because of reports of what the Lord had done to the kings east of the Jordan River (Joshua 2).

Note however the perspective of God. There was a young woman and her family in the city looking out at all of the circling and the shouting that the armies of God would do. She did not know what was going to happen. Neither did the Kings, the rulers, and the armies of Jericho. Her house was on the wall; we are told her position was vulnerable. Can you imagine the feelings of trepidation as well as expectation that she had? On top of that, if her house was on the wall and the wall fell down, God would have had to so arrange it that her house was left standing and her family and her were protected. Incredible!

Remember that this woman was considered to be a harlot or a prostitute and that is what the New Testament calls her. Her religion and social life was all around sex. We know that the art of the people in Jericho and Canaan was pornographic for little sexual figurines found by archaeologists all over Palestine was everywhere, all over the place. Their songs, their religious worship all centered around sex and their literature we have found was the most frankly and explicit sexual literature you would ever run across. Rahab was a part of this and lived right in the middle of this. But she was miserable according to chapter 2. The spies went to Rahab's house because she had a heart that was open and sensitive to spiritual things and God knew her Heart. The book of Hebrews tells us that she was the only believer in the entire city. She wanted to know God and so when the spies showed up at her house, she told them that she had heard of the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan and she knew that the Lord was God and she wanted further truth.

Actually, in chapter 6: 25 and in no other place in Scripture, the spies were called "messengers", because they did not only come to spy out the land, but they were to be messengers of the



good news of salvation, and they found a heart that was open. They told her about the Lord, and she responded in faith. We know that the spies might have initially thought that her house was a safe house, and it would not be considered strange that strangers would go to that kind of a house. That was the human way of looking at things. But Scripture seems to have another idea for it indicates that the spies went to the house of the only believer in the city, and she was prepared to take the risk of protecting them. God made His own arrangement of.

An interesting aside is that when Rahab came out of Jericho with all the marks of Canaanite religion Joshua and the rest of Israel probably had some difficulty handling her and she spent some time resting outside of the camp of Israel. But note the very next statement ***“She has lived in the midst of Israel to this day”***.

She might not have measured up to our standard, but she measures up to God's standards. God did not look at her past or what she was, but God looked at her heart and it did not matter what she had done.

Interestingly she later married a man called Salmon (Jewish tradition says that he was one of the two spies) but she had a son named Boaz who married Ruth, who was in the line of Messiah, and so she became a believer fully included in the greatest lineage possible.

So though we are focusing on Joshua, a prophet of conquest, let us not overlook the fact that in all of this God pays attention to every single detail that is important to Him. It's telling us that Rahab was forgiven and accepted and her trespasses were not held against her.

We generally will say no more than what one writer says,

***“If Jesus Christ is your Lord, if you entered into a relationship with him by faith, then you have been forgiven. The past has no claim over you. You cannot do anything about the past; it will always be there, but it does not make any difference. God loves you; he has accepted you. That fact also has something to say about the way we accept one another. The mark of our understanding of our own forgivingness, of our appreciation of the measure of forgivingness we have received from the Father, is the measure of forgivingness we extend to others. Do we expect them to live up to our standards, to dress as we do, to behave according to our code, to have the same kind of past we have had? Or can we accept those with a checkered career, with a wasted life in the past? Can we accept them, love them, and include them in the family, simply because they are in the family?”***

So let us now look at how God deals with another one of His children, who was very different from Rahab. We should therefore understand what God is really like.

Verse 2. ... *the Lord said unto Joshua* ... surprisingly, *the Lord* himself, addressed Joshua. This could indicate either (1) that the captain prepared Joshua for the Lord to arrive on the scene or (2) that the Lord had chosen first to introduce Himself as captain of the host before identifying Himself more fully. Either would be in keeping with ways that God had interacted with great men in the past (Genesis 18:1–2; Exodus 3:1–4).

The description of the forthcoming conquest of *Jericho* in terms of its *king* and *mighty men of valor* reassured Joshua that the victory would be complete; it was to be a decisive win for Israel. Neither king nor soldiers would escape.

... *see I have given* ... Joshua was commanded to see, understand and so reflect on the fact as a matter of confidence, that Yahweh had already given them victory. Victory is always by the Lord's hand and since victory is by God's power, we should expect it to be something that bypasses dependence on man and his own strength or abilities.





Joshua is called to 'see' with eyes of faith and to envision Jericho as destroyed. Likewise, in the New Testament, we are assured of our triumph over sin and Satan. "*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place*" (2 Cor. 2:14). (See Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:6-15). The victory is so assured that He spoke of it as already having happened, (Joshua 8:1; 10:8).

The words "have given" represent a prophetic perfect in the Hebrew text which describes a future event or action as having already been accomplished. Victory was assured by the promise of an omnipotent, faithful and immutable God.

The Promised Land was a gift from God to Israel (Num.13:1, 2; Deut. 4:21; 6:23; 8:10); to be received by faith, not won by effort. They had done nothing to earn or deserve such a gift; it was a demonstration of God's gracious treatment of them as His covenant people (7:7-9). Because of this fact, their life in the Land was to be different from that of the nations they dispossessed. That could happen only with a 'clean sweep' (Deuteronomy 7:1-6).

However, there will be a test of obedience as they are commanded in the next verses to march around the city and perform certain seemingly irrational acts. The theological emphasis on covenant obedience is recurrent (vs.5).

Verse 3. ... *And ye shall compass the city* ... because God was the giver of the Land, His instructions for taking the land had to be followed. Here He begins to outline His strategy for conquering Jericho. Merely circling a *city* was not an efficient military tactic, especially without being part of a larger plan to lay siege or attack outright. It could heighten the fear the people inside were already feeling. But it could also lose the element of surprise, as Joshua effectively used later (Joshua 8:10-29; 10:6-11). Perhaps the latter was the Lord's intent so that the Israelites would realize that the victory was solely by His might, not theirs.

One estimate of the circumference of Jericho was approximately two thousand feet, or just over one third of a mile. The marching would not take place right next to the wall, of course, lest the Israelites be in danger of arrows. A safe distance might therefore require a walk of a mile or more.

According to the military census in Numbers 26:1-2, 51, there were 610,730 Israelite men able to bear arms. The amount of time the march would take depended on the width of the marching formation, number of men and the speed of the pace.

Verse 4. ... *seven* ... hard to miss the repetition of the number "seven" (fourteen times): seven priests, seven trumpets, seventh day, and seven times. Seven is the number of perfection or completion based on Gen. 1:1-2:4. The fall of Jericho is an act of YHWH, not Israel.

... *trumpet of rams' horns*... the rabbis stipulate that this must be the left horn of a male flat-tailed sheep. It was used to remind the synagogue of the lamb that God used to provide as a substitute for Isaac, Gen. 22:13. It was primarily not a musical instrument, but a loud blast for religious (Exod. 19:13; Lev. 25:9), and at times, military purposes.

Unlike other nations, military success in Israel did not depend on numbers, technology, or skill. Rather, it depended on the Lord's presence. *The Ark* would symbolize that presence. But to trust in the symbolism without actually being led by the Lord was a recipe for disaster (1 Samuel 4). Obeying God was the key to victory. Other verses make clear that the priests marched on the first six days as well (Joshua 6:13-14). The deviation from the pattern of the six days marked the fact that *the seventh day* would bring a different result.



Armies need ways to communicate, and the *trumpets* of curved *rams' horns* served that purpose here. Use of trumpets for other communication purposes are seen in Leviticus 25:9; 1 Kings 1:34; 2 Kings 9:13; and Psalm 81:3. Trumpets made from different material are seen in Numbers 10:1–10.

Verse 5. ... *shout*... this term is used to describe a characteristic "war cry" (Jos. 6:10, 20; Num. 10:5,9; Jdgs. 7:20; 1 Sam. 17:52; 2 Chr. 13:14-15). YHWH used the daily marching around the city, the trumpet sound and the war cry to deliver Jericho into Israel's hands (Jos. 6:2)! One good example of a military cry can be seen in Num. 10:35-36 in connection with the Ark.

...*the city wall will fall flat*... this was a strange military tactic. However, it was the word of God and throughout the Pentateuch we have seen that not for the first time, God required His people to do that which seems illogical (Numbers 2) as a test of obedience and which shows their faith in His word and promises.

After days of hearing only shorter blasts of horns, the *long blast* on the seventh day would probably feel like a grand celebration for Israel. The shouts of *all the people* in combination with that blast would precede the Lord's bringing down *the wall of the city*. No other military action would be necessary for God to raze Jericho's defenses. For *every man* to go in *straight before him* would ensure they did not get in each other's way.

Verses 6–14. Evidently the whole Israelite nation did not march around the walls of Jericho. Only "warriors" and "priests" circled the city (vv. 3, 4, 6, 9, et al.). The "people" referred to in the context

(v. 7, 16, et al.) were these two groups of people, not all the Israelites. And probably only representatives of the tribal armies participated in this march, rather than all the soldiers of Israel. The line of marching order was as follows: soldiers, priests, the ark, and more soldiers (vv. 6-9, 13).

Jericho was not a large city. Archaeological excavations have revealed that its walls enclosed only about eight and one-half acres.

These verses record the obedience of the people, the priests and the armed men to Joshua's orders. Emphasized within these verses is his command for the people to remain completely silent until the time to shout. Only the priests' horns were to be heard.

The Bible did not explain the reasons for Israel circling Jericho 'once' a day for 'six days' and then 'seven times' the seventh day. This strategy did, however, give the king of Jericho an opportunity to surrender. The uniqueness of this approach undoubtedly impressed everyone with the supernatural character of the victory. It involved great faith for the Israelites (Heb. 11:30). There was probably also some significance to the number 'seven.' This may have impressed the Israelites further that the victory was a complete work of God, following the pattern of the 'seven days' of creation.

"The emphasis on the number seven (fourteen times in this chapter [Exod. 24:16; 2 Kings 3:9; Job 2:11-13; Ezek. 3:15]), the use of ceremonial trumpets (made from ram's horns), the presence of priests, and the prominence of the Ark all indicate that the conquest of Jericho was more than a military campaign; it was a religious event. Israel must always remember that the Land was God's gift to them.

Verses 15–16. *The people* obeyed everything that Joshua told them from the Lord, with no deviations (Joshua 6:12–14). Joshua spoke again as though *the Lord* had already given them



Jericho. This city was being conquered through God's power, not through Israel's greatness or might. Though it had not yet happened, it was as good as accomplished.

Joshua 6:17 contains a reminder to spare Rahab and her family because of her protection of the Israelite spies that came to Jericho, (Joshua 2). Everything else in the city was dedicated to destruction. No treasure or possession was to be spared for any reason (6:18–21).

The importance of following directions applied not only to the conquest of Canaan but was to be a central feature of Israelite faith henceforth. It was to be the key not only to conquering the land but also keeping it. The key to remaining in the land would never be found in military might, economic strength, or by mastering the tactics of international diplomacy. It would be found only in continuing to recognize the land as a gift from God and honoring Him as the giver in every phase of life. To fail in this regard was a guarantee that no matter how powerful the army or how strong the economy, the Israelites would surely forfeit the gift God had given them.

Verse 20... *So the people shouted ...* the people once again followed every command the Lord gave to Joshua (compare Joshua 6:2–5, above). Although we wonder how many *people went up into the city after the wall fell down flat*, no record was made. While arguing from silence is often unconvincing, we may guess that numbers are not given because they were not the key to victory. God's power was.

There is a certain amount of incompleteness in the archaeological record about Jericho because of the activities of man and nature. But it is interesting to note the following as one writer records it:

**“Excavations at Jericho by John Garstang between 1930, 1936, and more recently by Kathleen Kenyon between 1952, 1958, of confirmed the collapse of the wall under itself as recorded. They also revealed that the invaders burned the city (Joshua 6: 24), though there was some disagreement between Garstang and Kenyon concerning when this took place. Garstang held that the collapse of the wall and the burning of the city took place at approximately the same time, as the text records. However, Kenyon believed the city burned at a much earlier date and fell at a much late date. (Note: see Kathleen Kenyon, *the Bible and recent archaeology*, pp. 10, 36-38). After discussing the views of Garstang and Kenyon, Bruce Waltke concluded as follows:**

**“Although meager, yet the textual and the archaeological evidence regarding Jericho in late Bronze 11A and B 1400-1200 B.C. remarkably coincide, and once again the archaeological evidence suggests a conquest during the first quarter of the 14th century. Even more inclusive, however, is the evidence that the city was not occupied during the mid-13th century B.C., thereby precluding the option of the commonly accepted late date for the Exodus (ca 1280 B.C.) (Bruce K. Waltke, “Palestinian artifactual evidence Supporting the early date of the Exodus,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129: 513 (January-March 1972).**

There is of course much we do not know for there are many unanswered questions that the present archaeological research cannot answer. Historical reconstruction is not an easy thing and archaeology can rarely name sites and cannot tell us who occupied a site. But we have a certain amount of evidence so that we can believe that Jericho was a real place, and it was really destroyed, its walls were destroyed, and the city was burned.



Ancient Jericho relied on a wall surrounding the city to protect its inhabitants from invaders. As individuals, many of us have built walls in our hearts and minds for a similar purpose: to protect our self-esteem, to guard against challenges to our prejudices, etc.

It should be obvious to you that Israel now had a new experience of war and the leadership necessary to carry out its war of occupying the land of Canaan. Similarly, you should understand that God is always at war with sin for this is a direct affront to His Holiness. Sin destroys the people that God loves and has God has called to come to Him so that He can bless them. Often such walls end up destroying our relationships with family members and friends. Sometimes those walls are so strong that only the power of God can break them down. What walls have you built in your heart that needs to be torn down?

## **CONCLUSION**

Consider the faith required to trust and obey God's directions for conquering the city of Jericho (Hebrews 11:30). When first hearing the plan, many Israelites may have thought *What kind of strategy is this? Who conquers a city with such a battle plan?* The answer: God does, and His people do so by faith in Him.

God's bizarre (to human thinking) plan had an important spiritual lesson to teach the Israelites: Receiving the Promised Land could only be accomplished on God's terms. The people were not to compromise, ignore, or tweak the terms in any way. Even though the commands of God were unconventional, those commands were to be obeyed.

Christians do well to remember that God's commands are still meant to be obeyed without equivocating. Though Christians may disagree about some particulars, we know from Jesus that our first command is to love the Lord (Mark 12:30) and loving Him involves obedience (John 14:15). May we obey everything the Lord has revealed to us that we may receive His blessings!

Unfortunately, we sometimes feel that we are simply going on and on and progress is not always obvious. But remember that God has been talking to us about strategy. It might be that you are not quite listening after you have faith in the promises of God and in the word of God.

Your responsibility is obedience. God's responsibility is with the outcome. You might or might not have six or seven laps to go in your life but remember that you will have to obey every detail. Do not depend on human wisdom; depend on God's will and power.

