

Lesson 66

Israel Conquers Jericho

God collapsed the walls of Jericho so Israel could conquer the city.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God commanded Joshua to have the priests carry the ark of the covenant and blow trumpets while they and the fighting men of Israel marched around Jericho once every morning for six days. On the seventh day, they marched seven times around the city, gave a great shout, and watched the Lord collapse the walls. Israel destroyed the city but spared Rahab and her family as promised.

Key Passages

Joshua 6:1–6, 6:15–17, 6:20, 6:23, 6:25

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe how God gave victory to the Israelites.

Describe how God was faithful to his promises to Israel and to Rahab.

Memory Verse

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

After the episode of Rahab and the spies, God charged Joshua to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. The Israelites were on the eastern banks of the Jordan River and had not yet crossed into the land that God had promised them. Joshua chapters 3–4 tell of the miraculous stopping of the Jordan River's waters, allowing Israel to cross on dry land, and of the memorial stones that Israel placed on the other side to commemorate God's faithfulness. The bearing of the ark of the covenant before the nation (Joshua 3:11) declared that God was fulfilling his purpose to establish a nation for his own glory.

The first obstacle before Israel was the city of Jericho. In Joshua 5:13–15, a man identified as the "commander of the army of the Lord" appeared to Joshua. This man represents a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus. If that were not the case, the man would not have commanded

Joshua to remove his sandals. This was the Son of God himself in human form, declaring that he would lead and fight for Israel. This would be no ordinary battle!

The battle plan from the Lord must have seemed very strange to Joshua. Jericho responded to Israel's approach by securely shutting up the city (Joshua 6:1), an indication that they expected a siege. God's instructions to Joshua were for the army of Israel to march around the city once each day for six days, with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing trumpets (Joshua 6). But the people were commanded to make no other noise. Then on the seventh day, the Israelites would circle the city seven times instead of once as they'd done the previous six days. Finally, the Israelites would shout, and God promised that he would miraculously destroy the walls, leaving a path for them to march directly in (Joshua 6:4–5).

No other battles had been fought by Israel in this manner, and no others would be. God had a particular purpose to mark this victory, the first in the Promised Land, with a miraculous triumph that would follow a week of ceremony. God desired to conquer Jericho in a way that could not be attributed to Israel's military prowess. Israel would have had every reason, from a standpoint of military tactics and wisdom, to doubt whether God's directions for the battle would be successful. On the other hand, the Israelites knew the faithfulness of God's care for 40 years in the wilderness, had heard from the previous generation of their great deliverance from Egypt, and had experienced victories over the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (Deuteronomy 2:26–3:11). The Israelites were convinced that God's promise was to be trusted, and they obeyed his seemingly strange commands for the battle of Jericho.

Israel's faith at Jericho is mentioned in Hebrews 11 along with many others who demonstrated faith in God, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Rahab. These saints of God had faith that led them to look beyond immediate circumstances and trust that God's ways would lead to blessing beyond any earthly situation. In all of the examples, faith led to obedient action (Hebrews 11:7–31). Israel obeyed God's instructions for the battle, trusting his goodness and faithfulness. After the seventh circle around the city on the seventh day, Israel shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell. The Israelites went straight into the city and destroyed their enemies (Joshua 6:20–21).

Just as the spies had promised, Rahab and her family were spared because she protected the spies before the battle. Joshua 6:25 records that Rahab lived in Israel "to this day," showing that she became one of God's people. It also shows that the book of Joshua wasn't written very long after the events of the book occurred since Rahab was still living.

Historical/Apologetics Background

For much of the twentieth century, archaeologists declared that the biblical account of Jericho could not have happened as the Bible said it did. More recent discoveries, however, have not only led to an archaeological revision of the date of Jericho's destruction that accords with Joshua's time in history, but have also shown that the ruins were destroyed in a way that is consistent with the Bible's description of the event. What was once considered a "problem" of the Bible's

inconsistency with archaeological research has turned out, upon further discovery and study, to be an example of archaeological evidence displaying the trustworthiness of the Bible. For example, archaeologists found evidence that the mudbrick city wall collapsed and was deposited at the base of the stone retaining wall at the time the city met its end. This shows how the Israelites were able to go "straight up" to capture the city after the walls fell (Joshua 6:20). A section of wall that remained intact could be where Rahab's home was situated, showing God's protection as he promised. In addition, ash and debris found at the site confirm that the Israelites burned the city (Joshua 6:24). Of course, God's Word can be trusted completely, with or without such scientific "vindication."

The Bible says that the Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days. But were these ordinary days or long periods of time? This question seems ridiculous, but it is the same question people ask regarding the length of days in the creation account of Genesis chapter 1. No Christian believes that the Israelites marched around Jericho for thousands of years. Why? Because Scripture is clear. Yet, why do some Christians continue to question the clear meaning of Genesis 1? The answer is that they have been influenced by modern scientists who believe in millions and billions of years. Thus, they have allowed man's ever-changing opinions to have authority over the unchanging Word of God. The word translated as "day" in Genesis 1 (and in the Jericho account) is the Hebrew word yom. In Genesis 1, yom is modified by a number and used in connection with the word "night" and the phrase "evening and morning." Each time yom is used outside of Genesis 1 in just one of these ways, it means a normal-length day. There should be absolutely no question that "day" means a literal 24-hour day in Genesis 1 because that chapter uses yom with the combination of all three: a number, the word "night," and the phrase "evening and morning."

Isn't it exciting that we can trust the history in God's Word? Whether or not we have scientific "evidence" or archaeological "proof," we know that the Bible is the inspired Word of our God and it is entirely trustworthy.

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