



The Battle of Jericho Joshua 6

Introduction

How do you do the impossible? A sign in a shoe shop said, “The difficult we do immediately; the impossible may take a little longer!” On the surface, to conquer Jericho appeared not only difficult, but impossible. However, Joshua was reassured by the appearance of His Supreme Commander, the Lord of Hosts, who we believe was none other than the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate form, an event called a theophany.

Joshua needed this special encouragement because of the immensity of the task. Before him rose the awesomely impregnable city of Jericho standing between him and the conquest of the land. His only course was to proceed, but how?

Today Jericho is an eight-acre mound called Tel Es Sultan. It was excavated with keen interest by Charles Warren in 1868, followed by John Garstang (1929-1936) and Kathleen Kenyon (1952-1958). Miss Kenyon’s work indicates that Jericho may be the oldest city in the world. The fourth occupational level seems to be the city taken by Joshua. Two thirty-foot walls that ran nearly parallel circled the summit of the mound. They were made of sun-dried brick four inches thick and varying in length from one to two feet. The inner wall was eleven to twelve feet thick. The space between the two walls varied from twelve to twenty-seven feet and they were tied together by brick walls at frequent intervals. It is probably on one of these buttresses that Rahab’s house stood, along with others.

By comparing one hundred thousand fragments of pottery with fragments discovered in other tombs from the early, middle, and late Bronze period, one thousand five hundred unbroken vessels, eighty scarabs, the fallen walls, and other evidence, Garstang had no hesitancy in dating the fall of the city around 1400 B.C. ([Thompson Chain Bible](#), Archaeological Supplement). This ancient city is a perpetual lesson that nothing man-made is invincible. God is able to overcome unyielding objects and forces in unusual ways.

Outline of Joshua 6

- I. Divine Orders - Joshua 6:1-5
- II. Detailed Obedience - Joshua 6:6-19
- III. Doomed City - Joshua 6:20-28

I. Divine Orders - Joshua 6:1-5

- A. Survey of Jericho’s Impregnability - Joshua 6:1-2

1. Secured – 6:1

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel, none went out and none came in. The terrified city had sealed itself shut. It was seemingly impervious to attack.

2. Given to Joshua - 6:2

“See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king and mighty men of valor.” Without God the battle could have gone either way, for Jericho had mighty men of valor. Humanly speaking, issues are often in doubt. We do not know how they will go. However, when we are in God’s will, He assures victory.

- B. Strategy and Marching Orders - Joshua 6:3-5

Joshua’s Commander revealed the battle plan. This was no human strategy.

- “See, I have given Jericho into your hand.” The plan began with a promise. - 6:2
- Six days of circling the city once – 6:3
- Seven priests with ram’s horn trumpets and the ark – 6:4
- Seventh day seven circuits, a ram’s horn blast, and a shout – 6:4-5

“Marching priests and blatant horns are utterly inadequate to capture a city, and represent foolishness, judged by all ordinary methods of human warfare” ([The Analyzed Bible](#), G. Campbell Morgan). This plan was *the wisdom that is from above* (James 3:17). “The bizarre military strategy of marching around Jericho gave occasion for the Israelites to take God at His promise....Seven is sometimes a number used to signify completeness” ([The MacArthur Bible Commentary](#), John MacArthur).

II. Detailed Obedience - Joshua 6:6-19

- A. The Ark - Joshua 6:6-9

Without hesitation or question, Joshua summoned the priests and said, “*Take up the ark of the covenant*”.

Preceded by seven priests with seven trumpets, the army marched in front of the ark. The people were the rear guard.

B. The People - Joshua 6:10-11

The people were to be absolutely quiet. Not a word was to be spoken. Only the sound of the trumpets would be heard for six days outside the city as the Israelites marched once each day around the walls.

This “strategy” may have felt foolish even to the Israelites but perhaps it was meant to throw the enemy off guard and heighten their uneasiness. Furthermore, it was only once a day for six days and the Israelites could return to camp each evening.

C. Forward March - Joshua 6:12-14

1. Joshua rose early - 6:12

Joshua set the pattern and led the way by rising early to pray, as godly leaders before and after him have done, including the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35). If we did likewise we might have more victory in our lives.

2. *The priests took up the ark of the LORD - 12-14*

“Lead on, O King eternal, the day of march has come;
Henceforth in fields of conquest Your tents will be our home.
Through days of preparation Your grace has made us strong;
And now, O King eternal, we lift our battle song”
(from hymn “Lead On O King Eternal”, Ernest W. Shurtleff, 1887).

With excitement tempered by restraint, the troops began to move. First the army, followed by the seven priests with trumpets, then the ark, and lastly the people, without a sound. *So they did six days.* Has there ever been another siege like it? Probably not.

D. The Seventh Day - Joshua 6:15-20

The seventh day was different and even more extraordinary. The army, the priests, and the people were to march around the city seven times. On the seventh circuit, the priests were to blow the rams' horns and Joshua was to give the command for the people to shout, “*Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.*” When the people shouted, the walls would fall and the army would go straight in.

1. They rose early about the dawning of the day – 6:15

This would be the day of victory. The people in Jericho had grown accustomed to the quiet daily march one time around their city with trumpet accompaniment, without an attack, followed by a return to camp. Perhaps the people of Jericho brought their lunch, sat on the wall, and sent catcalls and laughter to the Israelite army marching at a safe distance below.

2. Seven times around and a shout - 6:16-17

After their circuit on the seventh day, the Israelites did not leave. Instead, they circled the city six more times. Perhaps the people of Jericho fell nervously silent. What did it mean - around and around, marching with those trumpets blaring eerily? And what was that strange covered box hoisted by poles on the shoulders of the priests?

Then came the blast of the rams' horns. Suddenly all the people gave an ear-splitting shout. It would have been the last sound the people on the wall of Jericho ever heard. For with it, *the wall fell down flat* (6:20).

3. “Doomed to destruction” - 6:17-19

With Joshua’s order and the people’s shout, the city was “*doomed by the LORD to destruction*”. The city was to be utterly destroyed. Only Rahab was to be rescued, along with her family, because of her kindness to the spies. Nothing was to be taken as spoils because the city was accursed. Taking things from the pagan city of Jericho into the camp of Israel would bring a curse upon the camp. The only exceptions were vessels made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. These were to be taken and consecrated for the LORD’s treasury.

In later battles the people would acquire possessions, houses, and captives. However, this was uniquely the LORD’s victory. Neither human effort nor human ingenuity had won the victory, only human obedience to divine orders had been necessary. Therefore they were to utterly destroy everything and everybody, taking nothing for themselves

4. “*Only Rahab the harlot shall live*” - 6:17

Rahab’s faith in Israel’s God spared her life and saved her family as a perpetual testimony to God’s grace bestowed on anyone who seeks Him in faith. Any Canaanite could have been spared, but there were no others who chose to break with their Canaanite ways.

III. Doomed City - Joshua 6:20-27

A. Fall of Jericho - Joshua 6:20-21

1. The walls came tumbling down

Archaeology has no better explanation of what happened to Jericho. All evidence supports the Biblical account.

2. *Every man [went] straight before him*

With the city encircled, the people could go straight in. Israelites would be invading everywhere.

B. *“Go into the harlot’s house”* - Joshua 6:22-23

Joshua’s unusual command to the two spies sent them to the house with the scarlet thread hanging from the window (Joshua 2:18). Notice that Joshua did not say, “Go see if you can find the harlot.” She was in her house, perhaps at a portion of the wall God had preserved. Rahab is an illustration of Psalm 91:7, *A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.*

The spies found Rahab and her family and deposited them safely outside the camp of Israel. According to Mosaic Law they were unclean and needed to fulfill the requirements for cleansing before being allowed to enter the camp.

Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate (for our sins). Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach (Hebrews 13:12-13). He identified with us in our uncleanness of sin. He bore our reproach and was deemed unclean, though He had no sin of His own. Therefore He was thrust from the “holy city” of Jerusalem as a criminal and died outside the city. So we can identify with Him in a world which rejects Him and go outside the place where the world accepts its own. Are you willing to bear shame and reproach for the sake of the gospel and the Savior?

C. City Burned with Fire - Joshua 6:24

Only the vessels of precious metal would survive the fire. Everything else, tainted with idolatry, corruption, and disease was destroyed by fire. It is like Paul’s description of the judgment seat of Christ when each believer’s life will be judged by fire. That which is *wood*,

hay, and straw in God’s sight will be burned. Only that which God deems as *gold, silver, and precious stones* will endure for eternity (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Christ is the foundation. He withstands the fire. Is your life built on that foundation? Are you building on it works of eternal value (gold, silver, and precious stones) or of only temporary value (wood, hay, and straw)?

The archaeological evidence of the strata of Joshua’s time shows widespread fire damage.

D. Result of Victory at Jericho - Joshua 6:25-27

1. Rahab’s Assimilation into Israel – 6:25

So she dwells in Israel to this day. Rahab was accepted into the nation, married, and bore children. As the grandmother of Boaz and the great grandmother of David, she was an ancestor of Christ. (Compare Matthew 1:5 with Ruth 4:21.) *“To this day”* means the account was written while she was still living. It was a contemporary record.

2. Joshua’s Curse - 6:26-27

Joshua cursed whoever would rebuild the city of Jericho. He prophesied that whoever violated the restriction would forfeit his firstborn son when building the foundation and his last child when setting up the gates. According to 1 Kings 16:34, this was fulfilled by Hiel of Bethel five hundred and fifty years later.

Joshua was one of the Old Testament holy prophets who *spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). God’s word is always fulfilled in minutest detail.

Applications

1. Do you have a Jericho, a situation where victory seems impossible? Will you commit it to God and begin today to surround it with prayer until you see it fall before His mighty power?
2. Will you submit to God’s plan and strategy for your life? What steps of obedience do you need to take in order to do this?