

Notes on Joshua 6

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Verses 1-3

1. What circumstances did the people of Jericho face?
2. What promises did the Lord make to Israel? (Think: Did this mean Israel did not need to do anything?)

Instructions for taking Jericho

Jericho feared the Israelites so that they sought security behind their walls. They were shut in so that no one could go in or out of the city. This was typical of walled cities that were besieged, but Jericho was especially sure to do so because of their fear of Israel.

God then gave Joshua instructions for how they would defeat the city despite the wall. These were most likely the instructions given by the Commander of the Lord's host in 5:13-15.

God began by saying that He had given Jericho with its king and powerful defenders all into Joshua's hand. Note that this was a gift from God (cf. v16). We will see how it was given as the story proceeds. But God clearly states that it was a gift. The people did not, by their deeds or actions, deserve or merit to receive the gift. They did not labor so hard as to earn the defeat of the city.

The Israelite men of war were commanded to march around Jericho once each day for six days. This, of course, would be a foolish way to capture a city, except for the fact that God said to do it. Hebrews 11:30 says the walls fell down by faith. The people were required to have enough trust in God to destroy the walls that they were willing to seek the victory according to His will. But this still required obedience.

Verses 4,5

3. What instructions did God give the army about Jericho (vv 4,5)?

Furthermore, seven priests were to carry seven trumpets made from rams' horns before the ark (the ark was to be carried among the soldiers as they marched about the city). As they had marched one time each day for six days, on the seventh day they were to march seven times and the priests were to blow the trumpets.

Then on the seventh day, after the city had been encircled seven times, the priests were to blow the trumpets and all the people were to shout. Then God promised the wall would fall down flat, and all the people could march directly into the city.

This did require faith. But it also constituted a miraculous sign. Clearly such a means of causing a wall to fall is impossible by natural law. It could happen only by the supernatural power of God. As such, it would serve the purpose of all miracles. It would confirm the existence and power of God as the true God, and it would confirm to Israel and to the people of the land that Joshua was truly a leader sent from God. The people should then respect him and follow his commands.

As a matter of interest, note that in so marching, Israel must have done "work" on the Sabbath day. They marched once each day for six days then seven times on the seventh day. No matter what day of the week they began, they must have marched on the Sabbath. Of course, this was done by God's express command, so it was not a sin. But we can learn that God never intended the Sabbath to forbid all work of all kinds.

Verses 6-10

4. What further instructions are added in vv 6-10 about how the people would take the city?
5. What New Testament *passages* refer to this event?
6. List lessons we can learn from Israel at Jericho that help us understand our salvation.

Joshua instructs the people.

Joshua then gave the commands of God to the people to follow in marching. These instructions were as described in vv 3-5, but some additional information is given.

For one thing, we are told that not only did the seven priests with the trumpets precede the ark but so did many of the soldiers. However, there was also a rear guard marching after the ark.

Further, the priests continued blowing the trumpets as they marched around the city (v9,13). But the people were not to shout or make any noise with their voices until the command was given to shout. This would be on the seventh day after the seventh circuit of the city. They would shout at the time when Joshua commanded them to shout.

Note how specific and clear the instructions were. Faith was required, but so was obedience. Suppose Israel had disobeyed the rules. Would they have received the benefit? Clearly the faith that God blessed was obedient faith, and without the obedience they would never have taken the city.

The fall of Jericho illustrates our salvation by faith.

Note that the walls of Jericho fell by “faith,” but Israel had to act to receive the blessing (Hebrews 11:30). Yet God said He **gave** Jericho to Israel (Josh 6:2). In salvation some say that, since it is a gift, there is nothing to do to receive it. So they conclude that baptism is not necessary to salvation. But God’s gifts are often conditional. We must act, but our actions are inadequate to **earn or merit** the result. The action required does not earn the blessing God offers, but it constitutes a test of faith to see whether or not we will obey even when God’s command makes little human sense.

Israel received Jericho as a gift from God “by faith,” but they still had to obey to receive it. So Ephesians 2:8,9 says salvation is a gift from God “by faith.” This does not prove there is nothing to do. It just proves that our actions do not **earn** the gift, so we cannot boast.

Salvation by grace through faith does not exclude baptism. It requires it.

For further information, see our articles on the importance of baptism and salvation by faith only or by obedient faith at our Bible Instruction web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct/.

Verses 11-14

7. Describe how Israel marched around the city. They did this once a day for how many days?

Israel marches as commanded.

So Joshua had the people with the ark encircle the city as God commanded. On the first day, they marched with the ark once around the city. Then they returned to camp.

Then on the next day they got up early in the morning and took the ark and circled the city again. The priests blew the horns as they marched, as God had commanded. They did the same thing each day for six days.

Verses 15-19

8. How many times did they march around on day seven? What did they do after marching?
9. What was to be done to the people of the city? What exception was given?
10. Give **b/c/v** where God had earlier commanded this to be done to the people of the land. (Think: Why was this just?)
11. What instruction was given regarding the spoils? (Think: Was this required for all the cities of Canaan? Why here?)

The seventh day

On the seventh day Joshua and the people arose early about dawn and marched around the city seven times, as God had commanded. On that day, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua for the first time commanded the people to shout, since God had given the city to them (cf. v2).

Instructions regarding the plunder

Joshua told the people not to keep any of the spoils of the city for themselves. Everything was doomed either to be destroyed or else to be given to the service of God. The people were all to be slain except for Rahab's family, because she had believed in God and had helped the spies (chap. 2). All the silver, gold, and vessels of bronze or iron were to be given to the Lord by placing them into the treasury of the Lord. If the people kept anything for themselves, they would bring a curse upon the camp.

It is likely that these instructions had been given to Israel earlier and were just recorded here (although Joshua could have been repeating them at this time).

At cities captured later the people were allowed to keep spoils for themselves. Why was Jericho an exception? Probably this was because it was the first city captured, so God's law of the firstfruits prevailed. The firstborn son in each family and the firstfruits of each crop belonged to God (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). Most likely God made a similar rule regarding Jericho to remind the people this was so.

Some have questioned the justice of God in destroying all the people of the city. But this is what God had commanded from the beginning. See the introduction to the book. God commanded Israel, not just to take the lands of these people, but to utterly destroy them and their idols. Otherwise, the Israelites would be influenced by these people to commit idolatry with their gods (Deut. 7:1-6; 9:1-5; 20:10-18). These nations had been wicked for many years, but earlier they had not been wicked enough for God to demand their complete destruction (Gen. 15:16). So He waited in justice. But now their iniquity was "full." God had determined that they had become so corrupt that the only way to remove their evil influence was to slay them all. We will later see that Israel only partially fulfilled this command, resulting in exactly the problems God predicted.

Verses 20-23

12. What happened when the priests blew and the people shouted on the seventh day?
13. What was done to the people and animals?
14. What was done to Rahab and her family?

Destruction of the city

As God had commanded, after the people had circled the city for the seventh time, the priests sounded the trumpets and the people shouted. The walls fell down flat, then each man went straight before him to take the city. They then utterly destroyed every living thing in the city, people and animals, as God had commanded.

However, Rahab and her family were spared as the spies had agreed with her. Joshua had told the spies to go to her house and bring out everyone who was with her there (see on chap. 2).

It sounds as though somehow this was done before the wall fell. Her house was on the wall, so it does not seem that it could have survived the fall of the wall. In any case, by whatever means, the Israelites spared her and everyone with her in the house.

Verses 24-27

15. What was then done to the city? Who/what was spared?
16. What curse did Joshua pronounce on the city?
17. Tell how this curse was fulfilled. Give **b/c/v**.
18. What effect did this victory have on Joshua?

The city burnt and the spoils given to God

The city itself was then burned with fire. But the silver, gold, and vessels of bronze and iron were put into the treasury for caring for the house of God (the tabernacle). As God had commanded, the people were to take none of the spoils (but note on chap. 7).

Rahab and family were spared, as the messengers had promised. When the book of Joshua was written, Rahab continued even then to live in Israel.

Curse on any who would rebuild the city

Joshua then pronounced a curse on any man who would rebuild the city of Jericho. Specifically, his firstborn would die when the foundation of the city was laid, and his youngest would die when the gates were set up.

This curse was exactly fulfilled many years later, as recorded in 1 Kings 16:34. A man named Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. His firstborn Abiram died when the foundation was laid, and his youngest son Segub died when the gates were set up.

Joshua was highly respected in his day among the people, because God was with him. This event also proves that he was a prophet, for his prediction came true. His miracles and fulfilled prophecies proved that God spoke through him, which is the purpose of these miraculous gifts.

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