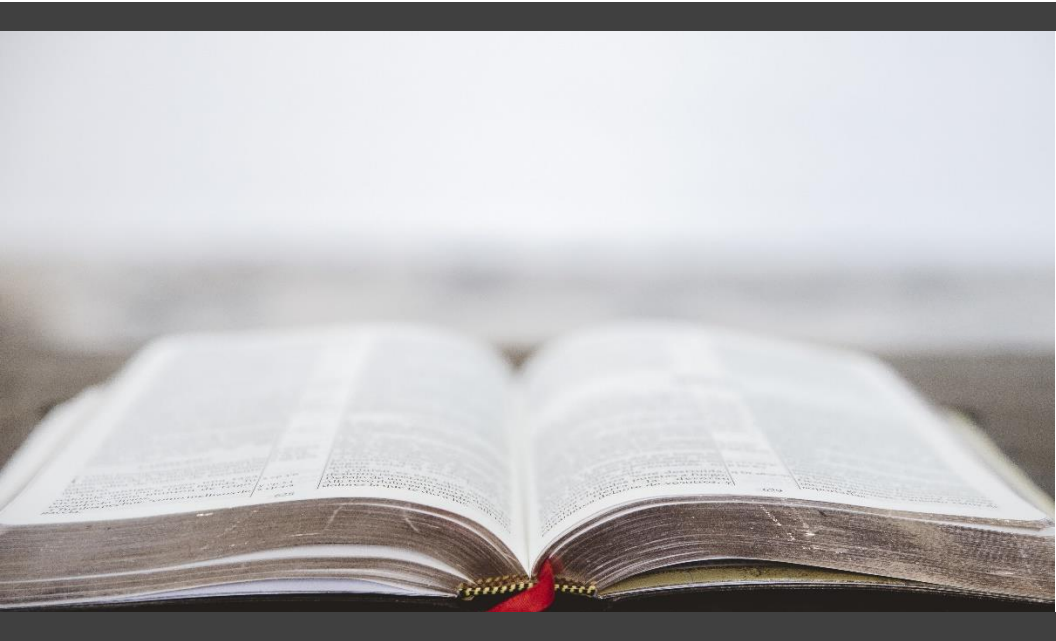


Israel Defeats Jericho



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Introduction

A. The Bible is a living and effective book (Hebrews 4:12). One of the powerful things about the Bible is the true stories it tells. For, not only are these stories useful in understanding the overall story of the Bible, but also in teaching many valuable lessons applicable to people today (Romans 15:4).

B. One such story is how the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho (Joshua 6).

C. Purpose: To learn about the victory God provided His people in Jericho and lessons applicable to us today.

1. Context

A. Israel prepares to conquer the Canaan land

1. The generation of Israelites who had rebelled against God and refused to enter the land God had promised to give them had now died. Only Joshua and Caleb remain from that generation of people who were 20 years old and older at the time of their rebellion.

2. God offered encouragement to Joshua as he prepared to lead the people in the task of conquering the Canaan land God had promised to them (Joshua 1).

B. Transjordan settlements

1. Prior to Moses's death, people from the tribes of Reuben and Gad were given some land east of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 32; Joshua 1:12-18).

2. The people of Jericho heard about the things Jehovah had done for the Israelites – including how He dried up the Red Sea and conquered kings across the Jordan (Joshua 2:9-10).

C. Spies sent into Jericho

1. Prior to the Israelites going into Jericho, Joshua sent two men as spies to go and scout out the land (Joshua 2:1). The spies stayed at Rahab's house (who was a prostitute). She demonstrated her faith that

God would give the city to the Israelites by hiding them and helping them escape (Joshua 2:1-22). Note that they agreed to spare her life and her relatives if she would tie a scarlet cord on her window.

2. The spies returned and reported what had happened, saying that the Lord had handed the city over to them (Joshua 2:23-24).

D. Israel crosses the Jordan River

1. Joshua and the Israelites left and came to the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1). Before crossing, Joshua said that the Lord was about to do wonders among them (Joshua 3:5).

2. After staying for three days, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant led the people into the Jordan River. When the feet of the priests entered the river, God stopped the flow of the river. They then stood in the middle of the river until all the people crossed (Joshua 3-4).

E. Canaanites fear

1. When news of how the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River reached the kings and people of the Canaan land, they lost heart and their courage failed (Joshua 5:1).

2. God continued to prepare His people after they crossed the Jordan, as they were circumcised and kept the Passover (Joshua 5).

2. Story

A. Jericho was strongly fortified (6:1)

1. Jericho was the first city in the path of Israel's conquest of the Canaan land west of the Jordan River (around 6 miles to the west). It was a walled city, with a city gate, and a king.

2. As the city had heard about what Jehovah God had done for the Israelites, the city of Jericho was fortified (secured), not allowing anyone to leave or enter.

B. Instructions given to Joshua (6:2-5)

1. When the time had come, God gave Joshua his orders concerning the battle plan for capturing the city of Jericho. God had now given the city, its king, and its best soldiers over to Joshua and the Israelites.

2. God instructed the men of war to march around the city one time per day for six days – with seven priests carrying seven trumpets of ram’s horns in front of the ark of the covenant. On the seventh day, God said to march around the city seven times while the priests blow the trumpets of ram’s horns. Then, upon a prolonged blast of the horn, all the troops were to shout. In doing this, God said the city’s wall would collapse and the troops were to advance ahead into the city.

C. Joshua instructs the priests and troops (6:6-7)

1. Joshua passed the instructions from God on to the priests and the troops.

2. One can only imagine what the people must have thought about the battle plan for taking the city. However, they had to trust in God enough to carry out the instructions.

D. The first six days (6:8-14)

1. Upon these instructions, the people marched silently around the city with the ark of the Lord and the trumpets blowing. After marching around the city a single time, they returned to the camp and spent the night. They repeated this for six days.

2. The order of their marching around the city was as follows: Armed men, the seven priests blowing the trumpets, the ark of the covenant, and the rear guard.

E. The seventh day (6:15-20)

1. On this day, they rose early and marched around the city in the same way – except doing so seven times rather than one. After the seventh time encircling the city, Joshua gave some final instructions to the people about what they were to do next.

- They were to shout because Jehovah had given the city to them.
- They were to recognize that the city and everything in it had been set apart to Jehovah for destruction. All the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were dedicated to Jehovah and was to be placed in His treasury.
- They were to keep themselves from all the things that had been set apart to Jehovah and for destruction. If they took of any them, they would bring trouble on Israel.
- They were to spare Rahab and everyone with her in the house for hiding the spies.

2. When the troops shouted and the trumpets blasted, the wall around the city collapsed by God's power (not by the might of the noise)! Then, they advanced into the city.

F. Rahab is spared and the city is destroyed (6:21-27)

1. As the army advanced into the city, they followed God's instructions to destroy everything and everyone.

- It is important to remember that God was bringing this destruction on these lands because of their wickedness (Deuteronomy 9:4-5). As for the children, God knew these would often grow up and continue the same wickedness they had been taught (although each had free will). But, it is important to recognize they would not be held spiritually accountable for the sins of their ancestors (Ezekiel 18:20), though they would be physically punished.

2. Rahab and those with her (her father's family and all who belonged to her) were spared according to the guarantee that had been given to her.

3. The city was burnt and everything in it – with the gold, silver, bronze, and iron being put into God's treasury.

4. Joshua imposed a curse at this time upon the man who would undertake the rebuilding of this city – that doing so would come at the cost of his firstborn (which was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34).

5. The fame of Jehovah and Joshua were spread throughout the land, as news of this great victory spread!

3. Lessons

A. Change can happen in a single generation

1. Remember that these Israelites who marched into Jericho were those who had been under 20 years old when their ancestors had rebelled against God because they were afraid of the people in the land (see Numbers 13-14).

2. No matter how your ancestors chose to live, you can change and demonstrate true faith in God! You can learn that faithlessness results in destruction and choose the way of faith.

B. Jehovah God is God in Heaven above and earth below

1. All the Canaanite nations had their own gods (Deuteronomy 20:18). However, when the time came for the Israelites to come to Jericho, none of their gods could rescue them. In the same way, none of the gods we may worship and serve (i.e. money, relationships, education, hobbies, etc.) will rescue us (or our families) in times of trouble and from the ultimate Judgment of God!

2. Only Jehovah God is the true God over all (Joshua 2:11)! Like Rahab, those who recognize this truth and put their full trust in Him will find safety in Him (spiritually). Those who fail to honor Him as God and fully trust in Him will be destroyed (spiritually), like the people of Jericho.

C. God always keeps His promises

1. The victory in Jericho marks God fulfilling His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:7). So, we should be encouraged that God always keeps His word and that He will also keep the promises He makes to us today in the New Testament Scriptures!

2. Although we often like to have immediate fulfillment of the promises God makes, this is not how it usually works. Many times, we must wait a significant period of time before God fulfills His promises (over 400 years in the case of the promised land). But, while we wait, we must maintain our confidence that God will keep His word and act accordingly!

D. God punishes wickedness

1. The people of Jericho were *not* innocent people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time when God chose to fulfill His promises to Israel. Rather, God had delayed fulfilling His promise about the land because He was being patient with the people of the land until their wickedness would become complete (Genesis 15:13-16). The Scriptures often teach about the wickedness of the people of the Canaan land, which included Jericho (Leviticus 18:24-29; Deuteronomy 12:29-31; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

- It should also be noted that the Israelites were warned that God would not spare them either if they would be involved in such wickedness!

2. When God chooses to punish wickedness, no one can withstand His punishment! Certainly, no one will be able to overpower

God when God sends Jesus for the final Judgment and destruction of the ungodly (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)!

E. God's instructions do not always make sense to us

1. I would imagine the Israelites did not envision a plan concerning capturing Jericho that relied on marching around the city, blowing trumpets, and shouting. Yet, that is exactly what God said to do – and the only plan that would have worked.

2. As we consider how to live and overcome the challenges of our lives, God's solutions often may not sound right to us. In fact, they may even sometimes sound strange. Yet, we must be assured that it is the only plan that will lead to victory (Proverbs 14:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)!

F. Faith trusts God no matter what He says and does

1. The Israelites trusted in God enough to do what He said – even when they could have been killed in doing so (Hebrews 11:30). Rahab also trusted in God enough to put herself at risk in hiding the spies (Hebrews 11:31).

2. Like these, faith is not an empty expression of belief in God and His promises. Rather, true faith acts in obedience to God no matter what God requires (James 2:24-26)!

G. God's purposes cannot be successfully opposed

1. While all the people involved had free will, God also had purposes He was carrying out. So, when He decided to hand over Jericho, nobody could prevent it (Joshua 6:2, 16)!

2. Many people want to maintain some sense of control over things that only God can ultimately control. But, we must recognize that God's purposes cannot be overthrown. He will do whatever He decides to do, despite what anything anyone may endeavor to do!

H. God must come first

1. Throughout the Old Testament, God wanted His people to devote the first fruits to Him (i.e. the first of their crops). Regarding Jericho, it is interesting that the plunder in this first city west of the Jordan was reserved for God's treasury rather than for their own personal gain (Joshua 6:18-19).

2. God's service must never be made to take a backseat in our lives to our own personal desires. Just as the Israelites were expected to

honor God with their first fruits, we should prioritize the things God wants us to do in His service each day and each week (i.e. assembling with the church, giving to the work of the church, studying the Bible, praying, etc., Matthew 6:33).

I. We must not put our confidence in earthly things

1. The city of Jericho may have thought they were pretty well fortified when the city was being built. They may have constructed a wall they believed would give them a strong measure of security. However, they were panicking when they heard of all that God had been doing through the Israelites – and that they were approaching the city!

2. The world offers many false senses of confidence and protection. However, only God provides the true stability that provides real confidence and protection.

- It is interesting to me that God would often choose such unconventional ways to deliver His people to victory so that no one would possibly mistake thinking the victory was by their own strength (Joshua 4:23-24)! Today, it is not by worldly wisdom that God saves, but through a message many consider to be foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)!

Conclusion

A. God delivered a great victory to His people Israel over Jericho in Joshua 6. This began the conquest of the promised land west of the Jordan River.

B. We can learn some great lessons from this true story that are relevant to living to please God today! Let us never forget these lessons and make the proper applications of them.

Study Questions

Where is the true story of how the Israelites conquered Jericho recorded?

1. Context

How had Israel been prepared to conquer the Canaan land?

Where had Israel been given some land already?

What happened with the spies Joshua sent into Jericho?

How did Israel cross the Jordan River?

How did the Canaanites react to news of the Israelites?

2. Story

How was Jericho described (6:1)?

What instructions did God give Joshua (6:2-5)?

What did Joshua instruct the priests and the troops (6:6-7)?

What happened on the first six days (6:11-14)?

What happened on the seventh day (6:15-20)?

What happened to Rahab and the city (6:21-27)?

3. Lessons

How can you learn that change can happen in a single generation?

How can you learn that Jehovah God is God in Heaven above and earth below?

How can you learn that God always keeps His promises?

How can you learn that God punishes wickedness?

How can you learn that God's instructions do not always make sense to us?

How can you learn that faith trusts God no matter what He says and does?

How can you learn that God's purposes cannot be successfully opposed?

How can you learn that God must come first?

How can you learn that we must not put our confidence in earthly things?

