

JOSHUA 5-6

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Joshua chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we have seen in our studies here in Joshua, God has placed Joshua in charge of the children of Israel. He has poured His Spirit upon Joshua, empowering him for the work that is before him.

And now, under the leadership of Joshua, God has brought the children of Israel into the Promise Land.

They crossed the Jordan River on dry ground and now they are in Gilgal.

This will be the place where they will set up camp, it will be their base camp as they prepare to come against the city of Jericho, as well as other enemies.

As we will see, God is going to put them through some final preparations before leading them against their first battle in the Promise Land, the battle of Jericho.

God is going to teach them some lessons before leading them into battle.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Joshua chapter 5, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

JOSHUA 5**VERSE 1**

Word has quickly spread that the children of Israel have now crossed over the Jordan River on dry ground and now nothing would stop them from coming in and destroying them.

Rahab and the people of Jericho heard what they did on the other side of the Jordan River, but now they are in the land and there was nothing that was going to stop them.

Interestingly enough, an archeological discovery back in 1887 confirmed what we read here in Joshua 5:1. The discovery was "*The Amarna Letters*" and they were sent by a coalition of Kings to the Pharaoh down in Egypt and in this letter they were requesting military assistance from Egypt to defeat a powerful group of invaders.

We see that the letter speaks of a group of invaders who were called the Habirus or Hebrews.

But no help was sent, maybe because Pharaoh and the Egyptians did not want to deal with this group of people again!

Thus, fear quickly grew in the hearts of the enemy, and it is a perfect time to strike, humanly speaking.

But God has another plan before they do battle. He wanted the children of Israel to consecrate themselves unto the Lord and then they would do battle with the enemy.

And as we will see, God will lead them in three experiences before they are ready to enter into this battle.

God is more interested in the heart than our activities folks, and once our heart is right, then it is time to do battle as we will see here.

Before we look at this, did you hear the story of the Catholic priest, the Pentecostal preacher, and the Jewish rabbi who all got together frequently, and they would discuss theological issues.

Each one of them believed that their way was the best and because of that, one day they decided to have a contest to see whose faith was true.

The contest went as follows. They would all journey out into the woods, find a bear, preach to it, and attempt to convert the bear. The most successful conversion would win.

They all went out and then they returned to discuss their results.

Father Flannery, with his arm in a sling, was on crutches. He said, ***“When I found the bear I started reading him the Catechism. He didn’t really want to listen, so he started slapping me around. I grabbed some holy water and sprinkled it on him, and as soon as I did it was amazing, that bear became as gentle as a lamb.”***

Preacher Billy Bob was in a wheelchair, with both his arms and legs in a cast. He said, ***“When I found my bear, Glory Hallelujah, I preached him my best fire and brimstone sermon. We don’t sprinkle, so when I laid hands on him, he didn’t like it. We wrestled up one mountain and down another until I threw him in the river. I dunked his hairy soul - praise God – and suddenly he grew as gentle as a lamb.”***

Rabbi Feinstein was lying in a hospital bed with an IV drip. His whole body was in traction. He was in bad shape. He opens his eyes and says, ***“Well, looking back on the experience, circumcision may not be the best way to start out with a bear.”***

But circumcision was exactly the way God started out with His people as we will see.

VERSES 2-8

From a military standpoint, you got to be kidding me! Circumcise the men before battle!

Folks, I don't care how you slice it, sorry, circumcision is not a good idea before battle.

But that is exactly what God tells Joshua to do – ***A RENEWAL OF CIRCUMCISION*** is the first experience.

You see, 500 years or so earlier God made a covenant with Abraham and the sign of that covenant was circumcision.

Then, during their captivity in Egypt those 400 years, they did not circumcise their sons.

But, as they came out of Egypt, they did circumcise the males and yet, during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness they did not practice this sign of the covenant.

That truly shows me the spiritual condition of the people at that time.

Now Joshua is renewing the covenant, the men will be circumcised, which truly speaks of consecration unto God or setting yourself apart from this world and unto the Lord.

It was a symbolic act of cutting away the flesh, becoming more sensitive to the things of God.

That is what Moses told them in Deuteronomy 10:16, “**Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.**”

Now, this new generation that has entered into the Promise Land will obey the voice of the Lord and be circumcised as the Lord has said, and once again, this was a sign of consecration unto Him!

You see, they were moving from a life of the flesh to a life of the Spirit as they cut away the flesh!

As Christians, God calls us to be circumcised. Now before you freak out, let me explain.

He does not call us to partake of the physical act of circumcision, and the men said, ***“AMEN!”*** but spiritually speaking.

You see, in Romans 2:28-29 Paul tells us, **“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”**

It is not an external act but one that is internal that will then manifest itself outwardly, in our actions, in what we say.

How is this done, this circumcision?

Not by our own efforts, as Paul reminds us in Colossians 2:11, **“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”**

You see, Christ does the work in us, He gives to us a new heart and He keeps that new heart sensitive to Him unless we harden ourselves to Him!

Get the picture of what has happened now, after these men of war are all circumcised. These men of war, these soldiers of Israel are incapacitated for a few days, and Jericho is only a few miles away.

How could they do this?

Because they trust in the Lord, what the Lord has told them. The Lord is not going to tell them to do something and then wipe them out or allow their enemies to wipe them out.

They are obeying what the Lord has told them to do. They knew the Lord and thus, they were able to trust the Lord.

And folks, it is easy to lose sight of things. I remember going through several tough times in the ministry and my wife reminded me, *“Joe, the Lord didn’t bring you up here to just leave you here but to do a work!”* I am thankful for her wise and godly words!

And I think the idea here is that God is more concerned with our hearts, that we are surrendered to Him, consecrated unto Him, and then we are ready to fight once the heart is dealt with.

Do not go into battle without first consecrating yourself unto the Lord, as Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

VERSE 9

God had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, destroyed the Egyptian army that was coming after them, provided food and water for them, their shoes did not wear out and yet, their unbelief brought a reproach upon them and upon God.

And in the end, it was that generation that refused to walk by faith that died in the wilderness. They refused to enter the Promise Land and they didn’t!

But also, it speaks of the reproach they suffered in Egypt, the bondage they were in, and God is rolling that away from their lives, that is what Gilgal means, *“the place of rolling.”*

How was this accomplished in their lives?

By their radical trust in the Lord and their obedience to Him, that is how this was accomplished in their lives.

You see, He told them to be circumcised and they obeyed!

For us as Christians, God has taken away our reproach, our dishonor, our shame as we were in rebellion and sin against God and now, through Jesus, He has set us free!

How is this done?

By our radical trust and obedience to God, by obeying Him and surrendering our lives to Jesus!

VERSE 10

This is the third Passover that the children of Israel celebrated.

The first was prior to their departure from Egypt in Exodus 12:1-36.

The next time they celebrated Passover was just before they broke camp at Mount Sinai as they were heading to the Promise Land in Numbers 9:1-5, and yet unbelief kept them out.

And for the next almost 40 years, during their wilderness wanderings they did not celebrate this Feast of Passover as far as we can tell. The Scriptures are silent.

And, on the very day that God told them to celebrate this Feast, the children of Israel are doing that very thing in the Promise Land, before they go into battle!

This is the second experience the Lord led them in, the ***CELEBRATING OF PASSOVER!***

Passover speaks of redemption and yes, for us, the work is completed by Jesus, and we must appropriate that finished work into our lives by faith.

And just as the children of Israel looked back at the first Passover and remembered all that God had done for them, we too should do the same. We should look back and remember the redemption that was obtained for us at Calvary by Jesus and live our lives in the shadow of the cross, never forgetting what He has done for us!

VERSES 11-12

Five days after they entered the land of Canaan the Manna stopped, this bread from heaven, but why?

Because God has brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, it will now sustain them; it was time for them to grow!

And this is the third experience the Lord led them in, ***THE APPROPRIATION OF THE LANDS PRODUCE!***

As Christians, it is no different for us. We need to grow in the Lord and not remain spiritual infants all of our lives.

Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for their immaturity as he told them in I Corinthians 3:1-3, **“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”**

Some have a hard time with this because they don't believe you can be a Christian and still be carnal. But Paul clearly shows us these are immature Christians, carnal Christians for he calls them **“brethren”** and he calls them **“babes in Christ.”**

In other words, they are not growing up!

The Greek word that Paul uses for “carnal” is *SARKINOS*, (sar’-kee-nos) and it speaks of being “*characterized by the flesh*” or being dominated by the flesh.

Folks, we need to understand that the message of the cross is more than justification, it also speaks of our sanctification. But if you are allowing the world to control your life, you will remain carnal, fleshly, you won’t grow up in the Lord!

You see, this group of people saw themselves as very spiritual, using the gifts of the Spirit and yet Paul says they are carnal, immature, babes in Christ and instead of digging into the meat of the Scriptures, they still were taking only milk, baby food!

They may have seen themselves as being ready for the deeper things of God, but they were not living up to the basics they already had, the things they were already taught!

Another aspect of this is those that just teach milk week after week, meal after meal.

Of this one writer tells us,

For a Christian preacher or teacher to give only milk week after week, year after year, is a crime against the Word of God and the Holy Spirit!

It cannot be done without neglecting much of the Word and without neglecting the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit, the supreme Teacher and Illuminator.

It is also a terrible disservice to those who hear, whether or not they are satisfied with having only milk. The appetite must be created.

Nothing is more precious or wonderful than a little baby.

But a twenty-year-old with the mind of an infant is heartbreaking.

A baby who acts like a baby is a joy; but an adult who acts like a baby is a tragedy.

It doubtlessly grieved the Holy Spirit, as it grieved Paul, that the Christians in Corinth had never gotten out of their spiritual infancy.

This tragedy is immensely worse than that of the physically or mentally retarded, who have no responsibility for their conditions. . . .

If we do not grow spiritually, the reason is always that we are still fleshly.

The believer's growth times are those times when he walks in the Spirit (Gal 5:16-17).

It is essential to understand that carnality is not an absolute state in which a believer exists (Rom 8:4-14), but a behavior pattern he chooses one moment at a time.

To say it another way, a Christian is not fleshly in the sense of being, but in the sense of behaving.

- John MacArthur

I think that is an important lesson for us. That we are continually growing in the Lord and not becoming stagnant in our walk, in our relationship with Him!

And folks, that growth is done as we read and apply the Word of God to our lives, as we learn to walk by faith!

And growth happens as we face the difficulties in life because then we must trust in the Lord, we must walk by faith and not by the power of our flesh!

VERSE 13

As Joshua is walking, looking at those walls of Jericho, wondering how they will defeat the enemy, lots of things running through his mind, totally focused on the battle ahead, all of a sudden there is a man standing with his sword drawn!

Can you imagine what he was thinking!

Well, we don't have to guess, we know exactly what he was thinking. Keep in mind that Joshua, a soldier, was ready to fight back but before he does, he asks this man, "**Are You for us or for our adversaries?**"

That is a great question, an important question. You see, if he was an ally you don't want to kill him but if he is an enemy, off with his head!

How will this person respond?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 14-15

Now you have to love the response of this man. He tells Joshua, "***NO!***"

Think about that for a minute. That is not the proper response to the question.

What is the problem then?

The problem is that the question that Joshua was asking this man was wrong. It is not the right question to ask.

You see, this is no ordinary man, but it is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus or a Christophany and I will show you why I believe this in a minute.

The real question here is not is the Lord for us or against us but are we for Him or against Him!

And what a great question this is for each of us to answer.

It is not, "***Lord, I am going to do this, are you with me?***"

No, it is truly like this, "***Here is what the Lord is going to do, are you with Him?***"

It is not about my will, or your will being done, my plans or your plans, but it is about the Lord and are we going to follow Him, are we for Him or against Him in our actions?

And yes, Joshua was the leader, and the military leader over the children of Israel, but Jesus is the Commander of the Lord's army, over the angelic hosts, over all!

Now, why do I say that this is speaking of Jesus?

Notice what verse 15 says, **“Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, ‘Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.’ And Joshua did so.”**

These are similar words that were spoken in Exodus 3:5-6 at the burning bush.

And, in John 8:58 Jesus said, **“... ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’”**

In other words, He is the voice from the burning bush back in Exodus and thus, this is Jesus here in Joshua chapter 5!

And here's the thing, and the Jews struggle with this man here in Joshua chapter 5 because God appears as a man or if they say this is a man, why is this holy ground and Joshua worshipping Him?

If this was just a man Joshua would not do that and the only reason the ground is holy is because God was there!

We are not to worship man or even angels.

In Revelation 19:10, as an angel is speaking to John, we are told, **“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”**

And, in Revelation 22:8-9 we are also told, **“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”**

Thus, only God is to be worshiped and where God is, as I have said, is holy, which tells me very clearly that this is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ!

In saying all that, who is going to fight the battle of Jericho?

Many would say Joshua as the song goes, the ***BATTLE OF JERICHO***.

Part of this song goes like this, ***“Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, And the walls come tumblin’ down.”***

Again, that is not true, for it was the Lord Jesus that fought the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumblin’ down!

And folks, the same is true in our own lives. We can try to tear down the walls around us in our own strength, but it will never be accomplished unless we let the Commander of the LORD’s army fight for us, bringing down those walls.

That is where the victory is found!

As we read on, we will see the battle plans that the Lord will give to Joshua, and they are very interesting to say the least!

JOSHUA 6**VERSE 1**

As word spread that the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River, that two Jewish spies had been inside the city of Jericho for a time, the city went on red alert.

It was what we might call *DefCon 1* or maximum military readiness.

The city was locked down. No one was going in or out!

Keep in mind that Jericho was not a very big city. It only occupied an area of about seven acres or so and yet, it was a walled city.

In fact, it was a double walled city. And the walls of Jericho were enormous. The first of the two walls was 6 feet thick and about 11 feet high. The outer wall was 12 feet thick and 35 feet high. And that outer wall had an incline of about 35 degrees, that made it nearly impossible to scale!

Also, these two walls were linked together by houses, and this is where Rahab lived, on these walls, a place that you might say was a low rent district.

But for the children of Israel, with the weapons they had, these walls might as well be 100 feet high.

But this was the Lord's battle, and He would give them victory if they would walk by faith!

Who are these people of Jericho?

The people of Jericho were Amorites, a tribe that descended from Canaan according to Genesis 10:15-16.

Thus, these are some of the people God gave over 400 years to repent of their sin and turn to Him, according to Genesis 15:13-16, but they refused to turn to the Lord and God was going to destroy them.

They knew of the God of Israel, as Rahab did, and yet only Rahab turned to the Lord and she and her family will be spared from this judgment.

It is as we are told in Revelation 6:15-17, **“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”**

They will know where this wrath is coming from, but they will refuse to turn to the Lord, they will harden their hearts to Him just as they did here in Joshua.

You can't fight against God and win folks!

And if God is fighting for the children of Israel, He must have some awesome battle plans for them. I am sure it will be spectacular how they invade Jericho!

It will be spectacular, but not as you are thinking!

VERSES 2-5

Imagine hearing something like this, what would your response be?

“Lord, what’s plan B? Do you have any other ideas?”

That would be my thinking.

Why?

Because this is not a great military strategy from a human perspective, but God's plans are perfect!

Six days they would march around the city of Jericho with seven priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, and the rest of the soldiers, and the priests would blow the trumpet and return to base camp.

And on the seventh day they would go around seven times, the priests would blow their trumpets, the people would shout, and the walls would come down!

Why in the world did God want them to use this as a battle plan?

Remember what Paul said, I think it applies here in Joshua, "**... the foolishness of God is wiser than men ...**" I Corinthians 1:25.

I believe that God wanted to take this initial battle against this strong enemy and make sure there was no human logic or ability that would win this for the children of Israel.

You see, there is no way that they could take credit for this victory. They would never be able to boast about what they had done, their military might! It was all the Lord's doing!

Again, imagine Joshua thinking about all this. We might think that his response would be, "*Great, and now you want me to have a staff meeting and tell the priests, the soldiers, the rest of the people that this is our plan?*"

But Joshua will do it because he is walking by faith and not by sight! He is trusting in the Word of God and folks, so must we!

Look again at what the Lord told Joshua in verse 2, "**... 'See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.'**"

The Lord is telling Joshua that He has given Jericho to them already even though the battle has not even started yet!

God has also **GIVEN** to us victories, but we must walk by faith just as the children of Israel needed to do, no matter how foolish it may sound! We must obey the Word of God!

May we not forget that!

VERSES 6-7

Once again, can you imagine the staff meeting between Joshua and the military leaders of Israel?

“Men, here is the plan. The armed guard will lead, marching under their tribal banners. Then we are going to have the seven priests with trumpets. Then the Ark of the Lord will go next, followed by the rear guard. We will march around the city while the priests blow the rams horn, and then return to camp.”

And each day Joshua would tell them what they were to do.

Can you imagine what was going through their minds at this point?

“Hey Joshua, you have been in the sun too long! This is ridiculous!”

And yet, each day the same plan was given for 6 consecutive days. Then on the seventh day they would march around the city seven times and as the priest blew the rams horns, they were to shout, and the walls of Jericho were to fall down.

The encouragement from Joshua was this, **“Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!”**

Again, the victory was not going to be found in the strength of the nation of Israel but in the **LORD!**

This was a test by God to see if they would walk by faith and a trial by the Devil to see if they would refuse. And the thing I want you to understand is that every battle we face is not the same as we see here with Jericho. Only once did the Lord bring victory to Israel like this.

Also, did you notice that the children of Israel were instructed on a daily basis, step-by-step?

Folks, we are no different, God directs us step-by-step and before he shows us step two, we must take step one!

This is illustrated for us in the life of Phillip, in Acts chapter 8.

Phillip was preaching Christ in Samaria, and things were happening. People were being saved. People were being healed physically and those possessed by demons were set free.

This was the place to be, things were happening.

Then God calls Phillip to go to Gaza, a desert!

That is step 1.

When step one is completed then God gives him step 2.

He was to go and minister to this Ethiopian Treasurer.

This man ends up getting saved and baptized.

It is then that Phillip is taken to Azotus, where he continued to preach, as God directed him one step at a time.

VERSES 8-14

Now it probably didn't take that long for them to march around the city, maybe an hour or so but as this lead group finished, some of them may have just started their march around the city if the army all went around the city, and I think they did.

And maybe the first time around the people of Jericho were fearful, ready for an invasion and when nothing happened, not a word even spoken, by the 3rd or 4th or 5th or 6th time, they must have been laughing and mocking the children of Israel.

How foolish they must have looked and even with all the insults, the children of Israel kept quiet.

What can we learn from this?

Think about it. Many times, when the world is mocking us, making fun at us, and we don't say a word, that is louder than our words!

Sometimes our silence speaks more than our words. Be sensitive to what the Lord is telling you to do.

God will give us the victory. You see, the problem is that many times when people are mocking us, we end up lashing out at them and nothing good comes out of that!

VERSES 15-16

Think about this. They marched for seven days and that means one of those days had to be the Sabbath.

How could they do this work?

Here is the reality. They really didn't work on the Sabbath, they just marched in obedience to the Lord because the battle was going to be accomplished in God's strength, not theirs!

And think about the shout that they made on the seventh day. ***“By raising such a shout, the people would at the same time have been sounding a war cry, which would frighten the inhabitants of Jericho, and also praising God for the victory he was giving them.”*** (Howard)

I like the way that Arthur W. Pink applies this to our own lives. He wrote, *“Two things are required of us: adhering strictly to the directions which God has given us, trustfully and hopefully waiting for His blessings upon the same. Patience must have her perfect work. Thus it was with Israel here. They fainted not because the walls of Jericho fell not the first or second nor even the fifth or sixth day; nor did they take matters into their own hands and resort to another method.”*

It is as Psalm 37:34 says, **“Wait on the Lord, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.”**

May we learn to wait upon the Lord and not rush on ahead of Him!

VERSES 17-19

I am sure you have heard people speak of God as being harsh, vindictive, full of wrath.

But notice, God tells Joshua and Joshua tells the people to spare Rahab and those who are with her in her home because she has come to know the Lord!

God gave all the people of Jericho plenty of time to repent and turn to Him before judgment fell and the same is true today and I believe God’s judgment is coming soon!

We also see here that this first battle was the Lord’s and thus, the first fruits of this battle belonged to the Lord, all of it.

In doing this they would assure themselves future blessings in battles that were coming. This first battle was to be given to God, the spoils of this victory!

And this is going to play out more as we get to Joshua chapter 7 next time, their failure to obey this command of God, or at least one person’s failure to obey and how it will affect the entire nation!

VERSES 20-21

Why was this destruction so complete?

Because what Moses said in Deuteronomy 18:9-14, **“When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.”**

They were wicked, immoral people that were going to destroy themselves like a rabid dog and before they could infect the children of Israel with this garbage, God said to destroy them.

And it was not only their immorality but also their false spirituality that God was judging them for!

We are told that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. Some say it was from the vibrations of their shouts that brought those walls down!

I don't think so. When I was young, I went to a lot of rock concerts and the music was loud, but no walls fell down!

This was the Lord's doing in response to the obedience of the children of Israel!

As some read this, they will even mock the story saying that there is no evidence for this happening.

So, is their evidence of this taking place?

You bet there is.

Let me show you what I mean.

John Garstang, a professor at the University of Liverpool, excavated Jericho between 1930 and 1936.

Garstang identified a destruction level at the ancient site that he called City IV.

He concluded that this was the occupation level which paralleled the city of Joshua's day, and that the biblical account was accurate. Jericho had fallen to Israel about 1400 B.C.

He wrote: ***“In a word, in all material details and in date the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative.”***

The March/April 1990 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (certainly no ***“fundamentalist”*** journal) contains an article titled ***“Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? - A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,”*** authored by Bryant G. Wood.

Dr. Wood is a visiting professor in the department of Near Eastern studies at the University of Toronto. He has served in responsible supervisory positions on several archaeological digs in Palestine [Israel].

In this scholarly article, Wood contended: ***“When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the Biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we find a quite remarkable agreement”*** (1990, p. 53, emp. added)

The professor emphasized several major points of agreement between the archaeological evidence and the record in the book of Joshua.

A summary would appear as follows,

The Bible indicates that Jericho was a strongly fortified city. It was surrounded by a “wall,” and access to the fortress could only be obtained through the city “gate” (Joshua 2:5,7,15; 6:5, 20).

Biblical Archaeology Review notes: *“The city’s outer defenses consisted of a stone revetment wall [some 15 feet high] at the base of the tell [hill] that held in place a high, plastered rampart. Above the rampart on top of the tell was [the remnant of] a mudbrick wall [about 8 feet high at one point] which served as Jericho’s city wall proper.”* (see Wood, 1990, p. 46)

According to the Old Testament, the invasion occurred just following the 14th day of Abib (March/April) (Joshua 5:10), thus in the springtime, or in the harvest season (3:15).

Rahab was drying flax upon her roof (2:6).

Both Garstang and Kenyon found large quantities of grain stored in the ruins of Jericho’s houses.

In a very limited excavation area, Kenyon found six bushels of grain in one digging season - *“This,”* as Wood commented, *“is unique in the annals of Palestinian archaeology”* (1990, p. 56).

The biblical record affirms that the conquest was accomplished swiftly in only seven days (6:15).

The people of Jericho were confined to the city with no chance to escape (6:1).

The abundance of food supplies, as indicated above, confirms this. Had the citizens of Jericho been able to escape, they would have taken food with them. Had the siege been protracted, the food would have been consumed.

The Old Testament record is meticulously accurate.

- Wayne Jackson, M.A., The Saga of Ancient Jericho

There is evidence showing us that the walls of Jericho fell down and not inwardly as you would expect in battle, but straight down or outward!

Listen to what we are told. I want you to see how archaeology supports what the Bible has to say.

We are told,

After the seventh trip around the city on the seventh day, Scripture tells us that the wall ***“fell down flat”*** (Joshua 6:20).

The Hebrew here carries the suggestion that it ***“fell beneath itself.”***

Is there evidence for such an event at Jericho?

It turns out that there is ample 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.

Kenyon’s work was the most detailed. On the west side of the tell, at the base of the retaining, or revetment, wall, she found,

“fallen red bricks piling nearly to the top of the revetment. These probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank [and/or] . . . the brickwork above the revetment.”

In other words, she found a heap of bricks from the fallen city walls!

An Italian team excavating at the southern end of the mound in 1997 found exactly the same thing.

According to the Bible, Rahab's house was incorporated into the fortification system (Joshua 2:15). If the walls fell, how was her house spared?

As you recall, the spies had instructed Rahab to bring her family into her house and they would be rescued. When the Israelites stormed the city, Rahab and her family were saved as promised (Joshua 2:12-21, 6:17, 22-23).

At the north end of the tell of Jericho, archaeologists made some astounding discoveries that seem to relate to Rahab.

The German excavation of 1907–1909 found that on the north a short stretch of the lower city wall did not fall as everywhere else. A portion of that mudbrick wall was still standing to a height of over two meters (eight feet).

What is more, there were houses built against the wall! It is quite possible that this is where Rahab's house was.

Since the city wall formed the back wall of the houses, the spies could have readily escaped. From this location on the north side of the city it was only a short distance to the hills of the Judean wilderness where the spies hid for three days (Joshua 2:16, 22).

Real estate values must have been low here, since the houses were positioned on the embankment between the upper and lower city walls. Not the best place to live in time of war!

This area was no doubt the overflow from the upper city and the poor part of town, perhaps even a slum district.

After the city walls fell, how did the Israelites surmount the four to five meter (12–15 foot) high retaining wall at the base of the tell?

Excavations have shown that the bricks from the collapsed walls formed a ramp against the retaining wall so that the Israelites could merely climb up over the top.

The Bible is very precise in its description of how the Israelites entered the city: ***“the people went up into the city, every man straight before him [i.e., straight up and over],”*** (Joshua 6:20).

The Israelites had to go up, and that is what archaeology has revealed. They had to go from ground level at the base of the tell to the top of the rampart in order to enter the city.

- <https://bit.ly/3U1CXaf>

I think that is very clear. God has told us what has happened there at Jericho, and we have seen the evidence for it!

VERSES 22-25

Here we see Rahab under the protection of the blood-the scarlet thread. We too our saved as we are under the protection of the shed blood of Jesus Christ!

It is interesting to me how the walls of Jericho fell down except where Rahab was living.

When you are in the hands of God, nothing will touch you!

And we see that this pagan prostitute, who turns to God, becomes the great, great grandmother of King David, in the lineage of Christ.

And outcast in Jericho, but God, not being a respecter of persons, uses her mightily.

Once again, in regard to the archeological evidence, we are told,

The Scriptures state that during the destruction of Jericho, **the city was set on fire** (6:24).

When Miss Kenyon dug down into the city, she discovered that the walls and floors of the houses were ***“blackened or reddened by fire . . . in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt.”***

- Kenyon, 1981, p. 370; as quoted in Wood, 1990, p. 56

VERSES 26-27

In I Kings 16:34 we see this played out as some 500 years after Joshua pronounced a curse on anyone who would rebuild this city, we see this curse come to pass.

We are told, **“In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.”**

Hiel the Bethelite attempted to rebuild the city of Jericho and it cost him the lives of his sons. (Note that the city standing today in Israel is not the same Jericho as in the time of Joshua, they are in different locations. The one in the time of Joshua has not been rebuilt!)

As I close, let me leave you with these words from David Guzik. He tells us,

This completes the story of Israel’s victory at Jericho. We can learn from the things that marked their victory.

Faith: Joshua and Israel believed the battle plan.

Obedience: Joshua and Israel followed the battle plan exactly.

Courage: Israel followed the battle plan despite danger.

Endurance: Israel followed the battle plan over a period of time, even when it seemed that nothing was happening.

Israel *did not* rely on carnal scheming and worldly methods; their trust was in the **LORD**, not in human ingenuity.

- David Guzik, Joshua

May we remember that the battle belongs to the Lord and what He asks us to do is walk by faith and see the salvation He will bring to the situations we face in this life.

May we have faith in the Lord.

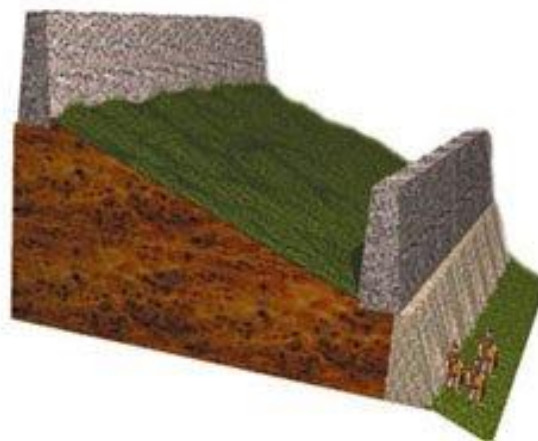
May we be obedient to His Word, his instruction to us.

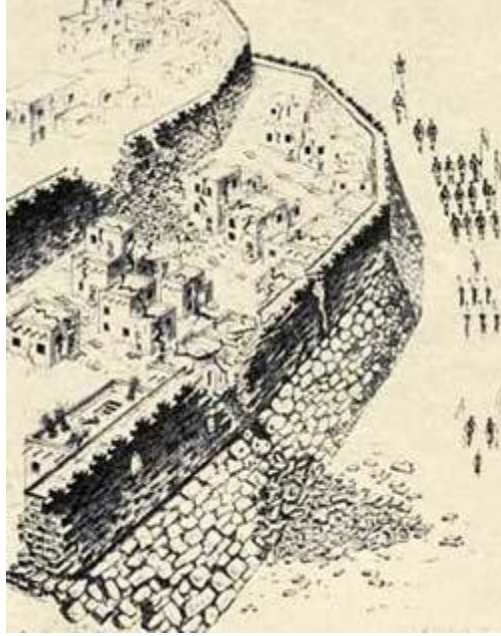
May we have courage in the Lord no matter the danger that is before us.

May we have the endurance to finish the race that God has placed before us, the work He has called us to do.

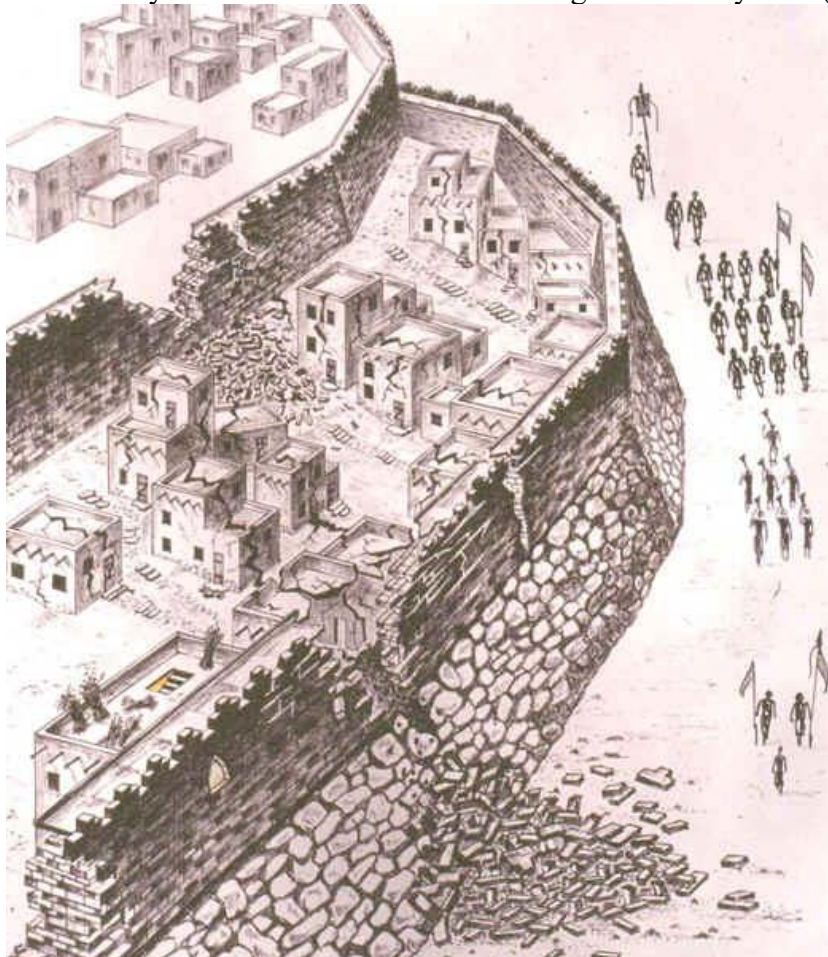
And may we not rely on our power, our strength, our scheming and worldly methods to accomplish in the flesh what must be accomplished in the Spirit.

May we walk by faith and not by sight!





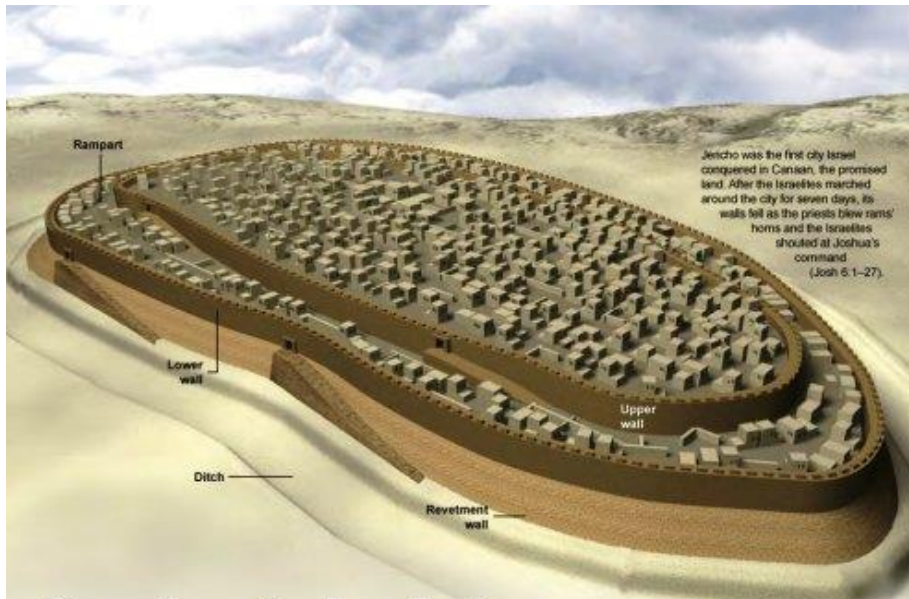
Artist's reconstruction of the north side of ancient Jericho, based on the German excavations of 1907-1909. Note the houses built against the mud brick city wall, which rests on top of the stone retaining wall. The Bible says that Rahab's house was built against the city wall (Joshua 2:15).





Jericho may be the world's oldest city: it dates back to Neolithic times, to 8000BC. The site had the main ingredients needed for an important city: an abundant water supply, good climate and a central location.





Ancient Jericho

Toward the end of the Bronze Age

Archaeological excavations reveal that Jericho was violently destroyed sometime toward the end of the Bronze Age. The walls seem to have been thrown down by sudden force, as if by an earthquake. Charred wood shows that what was left of the city was burned. Excavators have also found food supplies buried in the destroyed city, which shows it was not captured by siege.

