

The Book of Joshua

The Battle for Canaan

The Battle of Jericho

Text: Joshua 6

- I. The Instructions for Taking the City (Joshua 6:1-5, 17-19)
 - A. Remember that the Captain of the Lord's Host appeared to Joshua to deliver these instructions (5:13-15).
 - B. The fact that Jericho was "shut up" indicated the fear of the people and the fact that God had given the city to Israel.
 - C. Note that God declared that he had given them the city, its ruler, and its army (cf. Deut. 7:24; Josh. 2:9, 24).
 1. Even though it was a gift, it was still conditional.
 2. Jericho was not taken by "faith alone."
 3. Bible faith trusts in the promises of God and receives them by obeying His commands.
 4. The fact that God gave the city removed any merit from the actions that followed!
 5. Israel did not defeat Jericho by their own merit, but by submitting to and obeying the instructions of God.
 6. God gave them the victory and the city!
 7. Yet, He only gave it when they complied with His will.
 - D. The men of war were to march around the city once a day for six days.
 - E. Behind the armed men were 7 priests, each carrying a trumpet of rams' horn, which they were to blow.
 1. These were not the silver trumpets of the priests (Num. 10).
 2. Rather, they were the larger "jubilee horns" shaped like the horns of a ram (cf. Exo. 19:13; Lev. 23:24; 25:9).
 - F. Following these priests was the Ark of the Covenant, borne by other priests.
 - G. Last came the rearward - or the rear guard.
 1. The army seems to have been divided into two forces.
 2. One went before the Ark and the other followed after, placing it in the center of the procession.
 - H. During their march around the city, the people were to keep silent - only the trumpets would sound.
 - I. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city 7 times and, when the priests blew the trumpets on the last march and Joshua gave the command, they were to shout.
 - J. At their shout, the walls of Jericho would fall down flat - "under itself" - meaning they would crumble from their very foundations.
 - K. When this happened, the Israelites were to enter the city and destroy its inhabitants.
 - L. Yet, they were not to take anything as spoil for themselves.
 1. The city was to be viewed as accursed.
 2. This word has two meanings, both of which applied to Jericho.
 - a. "Doomed or appointed to utter destruction"
 - b. "A thing devoted or dedicated"
 3. Jericho was under God's judgment - thus, it was to be destroyed.

The Book of Joshua

4. Anything that remained was to be devoted to Him alone.
 5. If the Israelites took any of the accursed things, they would make themselves accursed - under the judgment of God (cf. 7:1).
- M. The gold and silver and metal vessels were to be dedicated to the Lord and placed in the treasury.
- II. The Obedience of the Israelites (Joshua 6:6-14)
- A. Note how the children of Israel followed the instructions of God exactly as He commanded.
 - B. This is a perfect picture of true, Bible faith.
 - C. It believes, trusts, and obeys God - exactly and precisely.
- III. The Fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:15-16, 20-27)
- A. Due to the obedience of the Israelites (and the faithfulness of God) the walls of Jericho fell down flat.
 - B. On the 7th day, the priests sounded the trumpets and the people shouted.
 - C. The walls fell down upon themselves, leaving the inhabitants exposed and without defense.
 - D. Israel attacked and utterly defeated the city of Jericho.
 - E. The only survivors were Rahab and her family, who came into her house as the spies had instructed.
 1. It is declared that Rahab and her family continued to dwell with the Israelites.
 2. She had become a believer in God; now, she is a proselyte to His religion.
 3. Again, she is an example of true, Bible faith.
 - F. The city was burnt with fire and only the precious metals were spared - to be placed in the treasury of the Lord.
 - G. Finally, Joshua announced a curse upon anyone who tried to rebuild the city of Jericho.
 1. He would lose the life of his firstborn when he laid the foundation.
 2. He would lose the life of his youngest child when he completed his work.
 3. Sadly, this came to pass (1 Kings 16:34).
 - H. Word soon spread about Israel's defeat of Jericho - and, more importantly, about the fact that Jehovah was with Joshua.
 - I. Thus began Israel's conquest of the Land of Canaan.

The Book of Joshua

- IV. The Archaeology of Jericho
- A. As one would expect, there are controversies surrounding the archaeological discoveries made at the site of ancient Jericho.
 - B. According to Bible chronology, the Israelites left Egypt around 1446 BC.
 - 1. Historical data shows that Solomon began his reign over Israel around 970 BC.
 - 2. 1 Kings 6:1 declares that from the Israelites departure from Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon's reign was a period of 480 years.
 - 3. Thus, Israel left Egypt around 1446 - 1445 BC.
 - 4. After 40 years in the wilderness, the battle for Jericho would have taken place around 1406 - 1405 BC.
 - C. In the 1930's, John Garstang (University of Liverpool) found evidence of destruction in the ruins of Jericho that matched the Bible chronology and details.
 - 1. He wrote: "In a word, in all material details and in date the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative."
 - 2. This was generally accepted for many years.
 - D. In the 1950's, Kathleen Kenyon (British School of Archaeology) led an expedition at the site, but with different conclusions.
 - 1. Much evidence was uncovered that fit the details recorded in Scripture.
 - 2. However, Kenyon dated the destruction of the city to 1550 BC - 150 years earlier and too soon for the arrival of the Israelites.
 - 3. She claimed that the evidence disproved the Bible.
 - E. However, Kenyon's complete and detailed record of what was discovered was not made public until 1982, almost 5 years after her death in 1978.
 - F. When others began to study her findings, it became clear that the Bible narrative was actually confirmed by the evidence at Jericho.
 - G. Seven powerful evidences that corroborate the Bible:
 - 1. Jericho was a strongly fortified city.
 - a. The only entrance into the city was by the gate (2:5, 7, 15; 6:5).
 - b. *"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"* (Wood).
 - 2. Jericho was conquered during the harvest season of spring.
 - a. The 14th day of Abib relates to modern March/April (5:10).
 - b. Remember that Rahab was drying flax upon her roof (2:6).
 - c. Both Garstang and Kenyon found large quantities of grain stored in the houses of Jericho.
 - 3. Jericho was defeated swiftly.
 - a. The city was defeated in only seven days (6:15).
 - b. The people of Jericho could not escape (6:1).
 - c. The presence of stored grain demonstrates:
 - i. The people did not escape; for, they would have taken food with them.
 - ii. The siege did not last long or the food would have been eaten.
 - 4. Jericho's walls fell down flat, allowing the Israelites to go into the city.
 - a. Kenyon discovered a pile of red mudbricks which "probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank" (Kenyon).

The Book of Joshua

- b. She even described the presence of these bricks as the result of a collapse.
- c. The amount of bricks indicates a wall that was 6½ feet wide and 12 feet high.
- d. When it fell, it formed a ramp into the city over which the Israelites easily could walk.
- 5. Jericho was not spoiled of personal possessions.
 - a. God commanded that only the gold, silver, and vessels of iron and brass were to be taken from the city (6:17-19).
 - b. The presence of stored grain shows that Israel obeyed this instruction (cf. 1 Kings 5:11).
- 6. Jericho was burned after the walls collapsed.
 - a. The Israelites burnt the city with fire (6:24).
 - b. Kenyon stated that the walls and floors of the houses were “blackened or reddened by fire. ... [I]n most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt.”
- 7. Jericho had houses built upon the side of the wall.
 - a. Rahab’s house was said to be “upon the wall” (2:15).
 - b. Several houses were found just inside the base wall which would have been built up against the defensive wall.
 - c. The place where these houses were found was described as the “poor quarter” of the city - where one would expect to find a harlot living.
- H. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that Kenyon’s dating was flawed.
 - 1. Pottery has been found that is made and decorated in a style that was used only during the period around 1400 BC.
 - 2. In the nearby cemetery, a “series of Egyptian scarabs [small, beetle-shaped amulets, inscribed on the underside, often with the name of a pharaoh] from the 18th through the early 14th centuries B.C.E. [have been found], contradicting Kenyon’s claim that the city was abandoned after 1550 B.C.E.” (Wood).
- I. Once again, archaeology has confirmed that the Bible is accurate!
- V. Lessons from Jericho
 - A. The obedience of faith - they did exactly as God had commanded.
 - B. The trust of faith - they obeyed, even when they did not see immediate results.
 - C. The unity of faith - they worked together; everyone did his part.
 - D. The discipline of faith - they did not do what God had forbidden them to do.
 - E. The perseverance of faith - they kept going until they received the promise (cf. Heb. 11:30).
 - F. The victory of faith - they received the gift by trusting and obeying God.