

## I. Joshua 6-The Walls came Tumbling Down

- Some quick info on Jericho:
  - Archeologists date settlement in the area of Jericho to 9,000 B.C.
  - It is the gateway to the hill country of Palestine from the Jordan River Valley, situated about 10-15 miles northeast of Jerusalem.
  - The city still exists today as part of the Palestinian Territories.
  - It is approx. 800 ft. below sea level, the lowest inhabited city on Earth. In contrast, Mt. Nebo is almost 3,000 ft. above sea level and Jerusalem is about 2,500 ft. above sea level.
  - The current city lies near the ruins of its location in the time of Joshua and in New Testament times.
  - Jericho is referred to in Deut. 34: as the city of palm trees. Receiving only about 6-7 inches of average rainfall per year, the city is watered by a spring (an oasis in the time of Joshua). Jerusalem, by contrast receives about 20-25 inches of rain per year. Nashville, TN averages nearly 50 inches of rain and 6 inches of snow.
- The city of Jericho is shut up tight because of the fear of Israel. No one is coming or going. God tells Joshua that Jericho is given into their hand to conquer. The warriors of Jericho are described as valiant, so the city is not defenseless, except in the face of God.
- Specific and strange instructions are given to Joshua on how to carry out the conquest of Jericho;
  - ✓ The Israelite men of war are to march around the city once per day for six days.
  - ✓ Seven priests are to precede the Ark of the Covenant in this march, carrying and blowing trumpets made from ram's horns.
  - ✓ On the seventh day, they are to march around seven times, blow the trumpets in a long blast and shout loudly. Seems like a lot of work for what was likely the Sabbath Day.
- What was the purpose of these strange instructions? To instill utter fear and stress on the people of Jericho? To perhaps show that it is because of obedience that the Lord will bring down their enemies? To show that it is the Lord, not the Israelite military strength of arms that bring down the enemy?
- Joshua sets up God's plan with the people. He tells them not to speak a word until the time he tells them to shout.
- In verses 17-19, the people are prohibited from taking the spoils of war into their personal possessions. They are instead instructed to put them into the Lord's treasury.
- The men of Israel carry out the Lord's instructions and the walls do indeed fall. The men utterly destroy the city, putting to the sword men, women (young and old) and the livestock.
- One exception is made. Joshua dispatches the two spies sent in earlier to find Rahab and her family and evacuate them to safety.
- The city is burned and the silver, gold and bronze/iron vessels of value are taken and deposited into the treasury of the Lord.
- In verse 25, Joshua states that "cursed be the man who rebuilds this city." The statement comes true about 300 years later in I Kings 16:34 during the reign of the evil king Ahab. Hiel of Bethel loses his sons in the construction of the foundation and gates. This text is somewhat ambiguous in wording, but says that it fulfills what Joshua said. The city does get built and is visited by Elijah and Elisha in II Kings 2:4, 5.
- As we will see in the next section, not everyone obeyed the directive from God regarding the ban on personal possession of the spoils.

## II. Joshua 7 & 8: The Defeat at and Conquest of Ai

- Achan took items from Jericho in violation of the Lord's commandment. The Lord's anger burned against Israel...unbeknownst to Joshua.
- Assuming things were status quo as far as God being with them on the conquest of Canaan, Joshua dispatches a recon team to the city of Ai. They return with a positive report: Ai is ripe for the taking and easy pickings. They advise to only go up with a small force. It appears that morale and confidence run high after the destruction of Jericho.

- Joshua sends a force of about 3,000 men. They flee from the might of Ai's warriors, losing the battle and 36 men (seems like a low number to cause the grief it brings on Joshua).
- Distraught and confused as to why the Lord has allowed this defeat, Joshua and the elders of Israel prostrate themselves before the Ark and Joshua cries out to the Lord for reasoning behind why He has brought them to this place only to be shamed.
- The Lord informs Joshua of the reason behind the defeat. God directs Joshua to bring out the tribes in the morning and God will, by iteration, bring the guilty party to the forefront. The offender is to be burned.
- The process begins and eventually narrows down:
  - Tribe: Judah
  - Clan: Zerah
  - Household/Family: Zabdi
  - Man: Achan
- Achan confesses his sin and gives an inventory of the things he took from Jericho: a Shinoran garment, 200 shekels of silver and 50 shekels of gold. The gold and silver value in today's dollars would be about \$35,000.
- Achan's entire family is set apart, including all his possessions, livestock and even his tent. They are all stoned and burned. This punishment seems harsh, but putting all evil out of the midst of Israel is a high priority and emphasized in Deuteronomy.
- The same holds true for the Body today. Examine I Corinthians 5.
- Ai is now ripe for the taking. The Lord tells Joshua that he will give it into their hand. He even allows them to take spoils for themselves from Ai.
- Joshua composes a battle plan that hinges on the tactics of an ambush force and a fake retreat. The men of Israel will march on Ai (this time the total force will be 30,000, 5,000 on the ambush force and 25,000 in the main body). They will stage a retreat when the forces of Ai come out against them, fooling the men of Ai into thinking this battle will go just as the one before. Once the forces of Ai have all left the city, the ambush team will emerge from their hiding place behind the city and invade the undefended town.
- The ruse works. 8:17 states that there is not a man left in the city. The Lord tells Joshua to stretch out his spear towards the city and signal the ambush team to move in. The ambush force invades the city and sets it on fire. Seeing their city is being burned, the men of Ai retreat to try and defend the city. Joshua turns his forces around and both Israelite forces engage the forces of Ai on two fronts. 12,000 men of Ai are killed and their king is hanged.
- In verses 30-35, Joshua sets up an altar and sacrifices to God, giving thanks for the victory. He also inscribes the laws Moses wrote down for them on the stones of the altar. This fulfills Moses' direction in Deut. 27:3-8

### III. The rest is easy....

- Joshua is duped into a phony and misrepresented alliance with men from Gibeon and has to spare their cities destruction. The deceivers are placed under a curse by Joshua.
- Five kings, including the king of Jerusalem, bind together to fight against Gibeon due to their alliance with Israel. The Gibeonites plead to Joshua for help and Israel comes to their aid in a surprise attack. The Lord aids Israel in battle by throwing the armies of the five kings into a panic and raining down stones on them when they retreated. The sun is held in the sky by the Lord during the battle to complete the destruction of the Amorite forces.
- The five kings hide in a cave and are trapped there by Joshua. They are later extracted, killed and impaled by Joshua. They are taken down at sunset and their bodies thrown back in the cave and sealed up with rock.
- Ultimately, the conquest continues and Joshua leads Israel (with the guidance and help of the Lord) to defeat 31 kings in Canaan (Joshua 12:7-24).
- The conquest is complete enough to divide the land up among the tribes (Joshua 13-19), establish cities of refuge (20), give cities for storage to the Levites (21), send the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manasseh back across the Jordan (22) and charge Israel to keep what the Lord has taught them (23 & 24).