

## Cities of the Bible: Jericho

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Jericho, referred to as “the city of palm trees” (Deuteronomy 34:3), is mentioned 59 times in the Bible: 53 times in the O.T., including 12 times before the book of Joshua, as well as 6 times in N.T.
  - A. Until the book of Joshua it is only mentioned for geographical reasons—something being *near* or *across from* Jericho.
  - B. As of Joshua 2 we learn that Jericho was the first city that had to be taken for Israel to begin its conquest of the Promised Land west of the Jordan.
2. Today I want to present some geographical and historical information about Jericho, as well as some lessons we can learn from the biblical account of Jericho’s defeat.

### BODY:

#### **I. The City of Jericho:**

- A. Age of city: **Ancient History Encyclopedia** (<https://www.ancient.eu/>): Excavations show Jericho is one of the earliest settlements dating back to 9000 BC, having the oldest known protective wall in the world.
- B. Location: Jericho is located in the Jordan River plain about five miles west of where Israel crossed that river on dry land as they came into the land of Canaan (Joshua 3:16). (Map)
- C. City walls:
  1. Answersingenesis.org: (see diagram)
    - a. Jericho was surrounded by a great earthen embankment with a stone retaining wall at its base that was 12–15 feet high.
    - b. On top of that was a mudbrick wall 6 feet thick and 20–26 feet high.
    - c. At the top of the embankment, roughly 46 feet above the ground level outside the lower retaining wall, was a mudbrick wall similar to the other.
    - d. These walls loomed high above Israel.
  2. Although you will find slight differences in the estimation of these walls’ dimensions, the design is known, and the importance of such daunting defenses cannot be reasonably denied.
- D. Size of city: (Answersingenesis.org)
  1. The area within the upper city and fortification system was about 9 acres.
  2. That upper area would hold about 1,200-1,800 people, though research has now shown that people lived on the embankment between the walls, and on the walls, allowing for several thousand within the walls at the time of Israel’s attack

#### **II. Lessons from Jericho’s defeat:**

- A. Jericho’s defeat is a lesson in **God’s grace**.
  1. First, Jericho was to be *defeated* by God’s heavenly army, not Israel.
    - a. We know this because a most unusual event takes place just before Israel is to engage Jericho (Josh. 5:13-15).
      - i. Here a man *with sword drawn* appears to Joshua and tells him he has “come now as the captain/commander of the hosts/army of the Lord”!
      - ii. That he had *sword drawn* indicates he was there to fight, to *bring divine judgment*, on behalf of the cause of God and His people!
    - b. God’s holiness demanding that Joshua remove his shoes preceding his leading Israel against Jericho is reminiscent of God’s holiness at the burning bush where the same was demanded of Moses preceding God’s promise to deliver Israel out of Egyptian bondage with Moses leading the way.
    - c. So, I have no doubt that we are to gain from this that God would bring the victory.
  2. Second, Jericho is presented as a *gift* from God (Josh. 6:1-2).
    - a. That God was to *give* Jericho to Israel was appropriate considering:
      - i. The seemingly *impenetrable nature* of the city’s walls.
      - ii. How God would instruct for Jericho to be taken has no militarily strategic value.
    - b. It would be God grace in giving Jericho that would make it possible for Israel to begin its conquest of the Land!

3. **Lesson:** Like Israel at Jericho, our conquest of the “walls” of sin must begin by God’s grace given in Christ, who is the *captain of our salvation* (Heb. 2:9-11 – “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the **suffering of death** crowned with glory and honor, that He, **by the grace of God**, might **taste death for everyone**.<sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons to glory**, to make the **captain** [author/founder] **of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.<sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being **sanctified** are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren”).

B. Jericho’s defeat is a lesson in *conditional grace*.

1. Though the religious world has been taught to reject this biblical principle, the text reveals that there were conditions to be met for Israel to *receive the gift of Jericho* (Josh. 6:3-5).
2. God laid down specific instructions for what Israel was to do for the next seven days.
  - a. It would be only after Israel did everything God said to do that “the wall of the city will fall down flat” (6:5).
  - b. Jericho was received as a gift when all of God’s conditions, as Joshua pointed out near the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> day (6:16 – “At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! **For the LORD has given you the city**.”).
    - i. Did you catch that? Joshua encouraged the people to meet the final condition of the Lord and “Shout!” because he says, “For the **LORD has given you the city**.”
    - ii. Meeting God’s conditions did not change the fact that Jericho was still a *gift of grace*!
3. **Lesson:** Like Israel, as recipients of God’s grace that brings us victory over sin...
  - a. We must not assume that grace negates conditions that God might lay out for our reception of His grace (Heb. 5:8-9 – “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.<sup>9</sup> And having been made perfect, He became **to all those who obey Him** the source of eternal salvation”).
  - b. Meeting His conditions still means God saves us—we work together with God (Rom. 6:17-18 – “But **thanks be to God** that though you were slaves of sin, you became **obedient from the heart to that form of teaching** to which you were committed,<sup>18</sup> and **having been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness.”).

C. Jericho’s defeat is a study in *acceptable obedience*.

1. Israel did all God said to do just as God said to do it (Josh. 6:6-16).
  - a. Every detail of God’s commands was followed meticulously.
  - b. As a result of their obedience, Joshua reminded the people that *God had given them the city* (6:16).
2. Israel’s complete obedience is emphasized, highlighting its importance in taking the city (6:20-25).
3. **Lesson:** Acceptable obedience means we must do *all* that God has said to do *as* God has said to do it.
  - a. There has never been any such thing as 90% obedience, or any percentage of obedience.
  - b. Obedience involves complete submission of our will to God in doing everything He says.
    - i. Deut. 29:29 – “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe **all the words** of this law.”
    - ii. Matt. 7:21 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father** who is in heaven will enter.”

D. Jericho’s defeat is a lesson in *sanctification*.

1. **Thayer** defines sanctification: “to separate from profane things and dedicate to God.”
2. This is what God demanded of Israel when they received the gift of Jericho (6:17-19).
  - a. No spoils and no one except Rahab’s family were to be saved (6:17).
  - b. Only things of silver, gold, bronze, and iron were to be kept and *dedicated to God*, or *for the Lord’s treasury* (6:19).
  - c. To covet and keep the spoils would make the Israelite camp **accursed** and bring **trouble** (6:18).

3. **Lesson:** Like Israel, our reception of grace includes the necessity of continual sanctification.
  - a. Rom. 6:1-2 – “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> **May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”
  - b. Heb. 12:14 – “Pursue peace with all men, and the **sanctification** without which no one will see the Lord.”
- E. Jericho’s defeat is a lesson in *faith*.
  1. Jericho was received from God by faith (Heb. 11:30 – “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.”).
    - a. That faith was seen in their following God’s battle plan of circling around the city for seven days that had no military value.
      - i. How strange it must have seemed for Jericho to watch Israel walk around the city once each day (taking around 1.25 hours) for six days and then go to their tents!
      - ii. Without faith, how strange God’s plan would have been to the Israelites, who despite having overwhelming military numbers, are walking around the city instead!
    - b. Their faith that led them to obey plus God’s grace meant on the seventh day on the seventh lap the walls fell just as God had promised!
  2. **Lesson:**
    - a. Like Israel, our reception of God’s saving grace requires faith strong enough to obey.
      - i. Do not miss the lesson of faith presented by Jericho (Heb. 11:30 – “By **faith** the walls of Jericho fell down **after they had been encircled for seven days.**”).
      - ii. Faith was why God destroyed the walls, but only after Israel showed their faith to be strong enough to obey His commands, His conditions.
    - b. Like Israel, true biblical faith, or faith that obeys, present us as a spectacle to the world.
      - i. God’s people of faith are spectacles to the world (1 Cor. 4:9-10 – “For, I think, God has **exhibited** us apostles **last of all**, as men **condemned to death**; because we have **become a spectacle to the world**, both to angels and to men. <sup>10</sup> We are **fools** for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are **weak**, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are **without honor.**”).
      - ii. The world maligns how our faith makes us different (1 Pet. 4:3-4 – “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. <sup>4</sup> In all this, **they are surprised that you do not run with them** into the same excesses of dissipation, and **they malign you**”).
    - c. When the end of this life and this world come and destruction is rained down upon the wicked and unbelieving, the wisdom of having faith that obeys God will be known by all!
      - i. It was Rahab’s faith that acted that saved her and her family (Heb. 11:31 – “By **faith** Rahab the harlot **did not perish** along with those who were **disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.**”).
      - ii. I remind you of God’s promise (2 Thess. 1:6-8 – “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> **dealing out retribution** to those who do not know God **and to those who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus.”).

## CONCLUSION:

1. I hope we have learned some lessons from Jericho’s defeat and like Israel we will...
  - A. Be thankful for *God’s needed grace* to overcome your insurmountable “walls” of sin
  - B. Be determined to accept God’s *conditions* that we might *receive His grace*
  - C. Seek to *obey* God *completely* in meeting His conditions
  - D. Accept that deliverance by grace *requires that we be sanctified, or separate* from this world
  - E. Know that faith in God that brings His victorious grace is faith that acts, faith that obeys God!
2. If you have learned these lessons and are outside of Christ, the Lord calls you to put your faith/trust in Christ and the grace He brings and respond by R-C-B so as to be raised to newness of life.

3. God in grace provided the means of your salvation through His Son, the captain of our salvation, who died on the cross to open the way to eternal life in heaven for you. Will you respond to God and submit in faith to Jesus today and be saved?