

# AN INSIDER OR AN OUTSIDER?

## (Sermon Summary)

### **Reading: Joshua 6.**

Here is another great event from the Old Testament. Joshua has taken over the leadership of the people from Moses. They are now about to enter the Promised Land. Jericho is the first of 31 victories that the Israelites secure to possess the land. This chapter is not a lesson on how to capture cities, nor is it a blueprint for some spiritual victory.

It is a 'one-off' event, a picture of absolute victory and absolute defeat. In particular it is a victory for the Lord over all that opposes Him. The opposition can be as well defended as it likes but it will not be able to withstand Him. So this is not some textbook approach to military strategy but the vindication of the Lord's power, His instructions, His presence, and the obedience of the Lord's people. Essentially His people did what they were told, and the results were spectacular.

#### **1. The insiders looked the strongest.**

The city was strong and 'shut up' (v1). It seemed an impregnable city and a definite challenge to Israel as they sought to enter the Promised Land. The world seems to have great advantages in terms of numbers, celebrities, power, and technology. Big business and the world of entertainment are signed up to it for the most part. Here is a sense of belonging and membership, where there are rewards for thinking the 'right things' and supporting the 'right things'. It looks like the normal state of things where, if you belong, you will be on the right side of history.

The pandemic, however, exposed some problems and weaknesses for the system. It did not do so well when faced with challenges. Global supply chains partially failed, and borders were closed. People, unable to leave their homes, were sometimes radicalized and became Islamic extremists. Anti-Semitism grew. It exposed an emptiness and fear at the heart of the project which, when faced with something threatening and ultimate, had few answers of consequence to give. Besides that, many, while not becoming Christians, saw through much of its emptiness and longed for something better. Jericho looked to be strong, but we learn that it was fearful at its core (Joshua 2: 9-11).

Do we really want to be joined up to this system and be shut in with something that is doomed to fail? What are we uncritically signing up to? It is not safe, normal and

enduring. If our hopes are built on this world having answers to the biggest issues of life, it is going to fail and collapse (Matthew 7:24-27; and Revelation 18:9-20). Babylon is the picture in Revelation of a political and economic system that is opposed to God and His truth. It is a denial of basic reality and truth, and it will be judged finally when the Lord returns, and all its walls collapse. Just as Joshua brings judgment for all that old Jericho stood for, the Lord's return will bring final ruin on the world's empty plans. We should not fear the end of the world, but we should fear God instead.

## **2. The outsider looked the weakest.**

The Israelites seemed to be the outsiders, approaching Jericho with no obvious means of being able to take the city. Yet they had the Lord with them. They had a relationship with Him. The ark symbolized His presence among them. They had the priests as His appointed representatives and servants. These were actually the people with power, a destiny, reality and something substantial. Spiritual power and reality can more than compete with the money, power and influence of the world. Their numbers and big people are no match for the Lord.

Christ's triumph becomes the church's triumph. Christ's return spells the end for all the world's hopes, systems and dreams. His kingdom prevails over all. All kingdoms will then belong to Him. All His enemies will become His footstool.

His people will also prevail and overcome. We will be with the Lord when He comes again and judges His enemies. The outsiders may be ridiculed and despised today but they will not be then. The Lord's promises to His people will all hold good and have an eternal dimension. Everything else will collapse and be swept away.

We see how Rahab is remembered and is able to escape with her family (v25). She is rescued out of the city, doomed to destruction. Any of us who seek the Lord will be able to escape the wrath to come and find true peace and safety. If we have not yet found Him, then we should seek His mercy now and will be brought safely to Him. It means leaving behind what appeared to be comfortable and where there was seeming strength and numbers. Rahab had seized that moment to go with the Lord's people who, in the end, were the people with a future.

The ultimate outsider was the Lord Jesus Christ. He was despised as He died on the cross. He was making peace for us there. We are to repent and go out to Him. We leave this city and kingdom, which will not last, and are joined to the kingdom that will last. We pledge our loyalty, love and service to Him. We will then become the Lord's 'insiders', belonging to Him and belonging ultimately to heaven.