

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho – Joshua 6:1-16; 20-21

I. Introduction:

- A. It is said that prior to the Civil War, slaves in the South were singing the song: *“Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho”*
1. Their words were something like: *“Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came a’ tumblin’ down, Hallelujah.”*
 2. Eventually there were about a dozen verses added to that song. I particularly like the second:
 3. *“You may talk about the men of Gideon; You may talk about the men of Saul. But there’re none like good old Joshua at the battle of Jericho, Hallelujah.”*
- B. When I googled that song, the third or fourth link was in the form of the question: *“Did Joshua fight the battle of Jericho?”*
1. The Christian should quickly answer, *“Absolutely, because the Bible tells us so.”*
 2. But there are some interesting considerations to that question:
 3. For example, can we really call it a battle? And if it was a battle, was it really Joshua’s fight? Who won?
- C. This is our tenth lesson in this series on practical faith.
1. And for the most part, the examples of faith at which we’ve looked have been essentially defensive.
 2. We looked at **Noah’s Ark** which was built by faith for the saving of his household.
 - a. And **Abraham’s** faith in leaving Ur and Haran was not in order to attack Canaan.
 - b. There was the faith of **Abraham** in sacrificing his son, and sending his servant back to Haran.
 - c. The **exodus** was an escape, not an attack.
 3. All of these required great faith – an absolute sacrifice of self and a trust in God’s will and power.
 4. The nature of our example this morning is slightly different from the others.
- D. Not only do we need to trust God for our defense – in our illness or grief, and in our protection.
1. But are sometimes we are asked to go into battle. Sometimes we are to be aggressive and offensive.
 - a. *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”* That requires faith in God.
 - b. Sometimes we must *“earnestly contend for the faith.”*
 2. The Christian soldier who goes into battle in his own strength is going to find the enemy stronger than he.
 3. We need the Lord to bring down the walls of Jericho, the walls of heresy & the walls of stubborn sinfulness.
- E. What can we learn about faith by looking at Joshua’s battle at Jericho?

II. Consider first, faith’s **OBJECT**, which in this case was Jericho.

- A. When Moses was nearing his departure from this life, standing at the top of Nebo, he could clearly see the city
1. It is called *“the city of palm trees”* in the Bible, probably for obvious reasons.
 2. It was located in the valley of the Jordan, at the foot of the foothills which lead up toward Bethel and the highlands around Jerusalem. It was wealthy through trade and farming. It was well-supplied.
 3. I wonder what the population was at the time? Some suggest it was two to three thousand.
 4. Whether or not that was the case, they didn’t live in family homes each with grassy yards 50’ by 100’.
 5. They were probably packed together relatively tightly – elbow to elbow. So how large was the city?
 6. What was the circumference? How many miles or cubits were the walls of the city?
 7. It could certainly be circled seven times in a full day.
- B. We are told that Jericho was *“straitly shut up”* – it was tightly enclosed, and there were likely guards on the roofs of the houses which were built into the walls.
1. There might have been a desire of many Israelites to simply ignore Jericho and to move on.
 2. Why risk our lives for a city which is not actually very important to us?
 3. Isn’t that the way many of us are? I admit that is the sort of person I am.
 4. If I don’t have to deal with this problem or that problem, I will try to ignore them, hoping they will go away.
 5. But Jericho wasn’t going anywhere, and encapsulating the city it wasn’t a good idea.
 6. It was a cancer, not a DVT, and it would poison the whole nation if it was not removed right now.

- C. But consider this: Jericho was not any worse or more wicked than any another Canaanite community.
1. Paraphrasing the Lord Jesus, *“Suppose ye that these (Jerichoans) were sinners above all the (Canaanites), because they suffered such things?”*
 - a. *I tell you Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
 - b. *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*
 - c. *I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” – Luke 13.*
 2. The residents of Jericho were sinners already under the wrath of God.
 3. The people of Jericho were in need of God’s saving grace like everyone else.
- D. And, by the way, they were **as savable** as anyone else.
1. Remember, one of their citizens, Rahab the Harlot, had already been saved by God’s grace.
 2. She humbled herself before the God of the Hebrews, and she had been promised deliverance from the destruction which was to come.
- E. And this is the first point where this history collides with our present reality.
1. It is more our duty to rescue the Rahabs around us than to bring the walls of Jericho down.
 2. Yes, we are to *“earnestly contend for the faith,”* but perhaps the best way to do that is to bring unbelievers into the faith and to disciple them in the truth.
 3. It takes the power of God to do these things, and therefore, it needs to engage our faith.
 4. We are not capable of saving Rahab or bringing Jericho to its knees. Only God can do these things.
 5. Please pray with me as I preach the gospel, that the Lord will awaken a few Rahabs to their eternal needs.
 6. Let’s all come to each and every evangelistic service beseeching God and believing that God will once again prove that the sinner’s heart is in His hands, and He can turn it withersoever He chooseth.
- F. As we are told, at this point in Joshua’s service, he was considering at the walls of the city.
1. They looked indestructible and impregnable.
 2. He didn’t have the military equipment to bring them down. He had no battering rams or catapults.
 3. He knew that God intended to give Israel victory, but how to perform or receive that which God had promised he knew not.
 4. So it was going to require faith on his part – on Israel’s part – to bring the walls of Jericho down.

III. And that brings us, once again, to faith’s SOURCE.

- A. Israel had crossed the Jordan River and was bivouacked at Gilgal, not far from their target.
1. The spies had returned from their reconnaissance trip, but they apparently didn’t discover any of Jericho’s weaknesses.
 2. Israel had celebrated an abbreviated Passover, but even more important, the men of the nation were extremely sore from their recent circumcisions.
- B. Then, shortly after that, Joshua was out looking once again at the enemy city.
1. **Joshua 5:13** – *“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?”*
 2. *And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?”*
 3. *And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”*

- C. This paragraph is completely surreal.
1. Joshua was looking down, probably praying for wisdom, and when he looked up a stranger surprised him.
 - a. That appearance was miraculous. This man just appeared out of nowhere.
 - b. But I don't know that Joshua thought it so at the time.
 - c. His mind might have initially tried to explain away this sudden visitor.
 2. And the man had a drawn sword, but Joshua walked toward him anyway. Why? Was his sword also drawn?
 3. And why did he expect an honest answer when he asked on whose side the visitor was?
 4. The man, who wasn't a man at all, declared that he was the Captain of the army, or host, of God.
 5. Instantly Joshua believed him. Why? It was because God put that into his heart.
 6. And when he was told to take his shoes off, he did so, making himself even more vulnerable to attack.
- D. Who was this Captain of the host of the Lord?
1. I am of the opinion that He was the preincarnate Son of God.
 2. Joshua immediately threw himself down in reverence before this visitor, & he wasn't rebuked or corrected.
 3. He kicked off his shoes, just as Moses had done at the burning bush more than forty years earlier.
 4. Then in the next chapter we are told that Jehovah explained the battle plan, and that was probably during this visit.
- E. The faith which Israel will need in their attack upon Jericho will come as a result of the words of the Lord.
1. And that is precisely where our faith should originate.
 2. There are religions under the umbrella of Christendom, which have taken their major doctrines out of alleged special revelations and visions – prophets and spirit guides – with and without magic glasses.
 3. Those doctrines aren't worth the paper they are printed on, and neither are those religions.
 4. But the pages of the Word of God are worth their weight in gold – for so many reasons.
 5. Not the least of which is *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”*
 6. Joshua knew what was going to come to pass, and he knew his part in what was coming, because of the directions which God gave him.
- F. I long to see the Lord work among us in these last days. I want to witness the power of God.
1. I need to increase and strengthen my faith, and I know that these things are God's gifts.
 2. And when it comes to strengthening our faith, I know we must begin with God's Word.
 3. This is the reason why we are in the midst of this study.
 4. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”*
- G. Before we get to the Lord's plans, there is one little detail which may be extremely important.
1. *“And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.”*
 - a. On whose side is God? Most of us would like to think that God is always on our side.
 - b. We think we are always right. Our opinion is always correct, so Jericho is always God's enemy.
 2. The question is: can you trust God enough to admit that may not always be the case?
 - a. How strong is your faith? Is it strong enough to trust God no matter what?
 - b. Can you trust God even in defeat?
 3. Jehovah is not a servant to any man, and not even the best faith or the purest obedience makes that so.
 4. The best servant of God is nothing more than that – God's servant.
 5. The Lord is most glorified when His servants do His will according to His plan.
 6. But the truth is, even when the wicked disobey God, and they feel the Lord's wrath, God is glorified.
 7. It's our job to make sure we are doing our best to personally, directly and positively do His will.
 8. And remember Jehovah really is God, and His purpose may include our defeat, as Israel was defeated at Ai in the next battle.

IV. That brings us to faith's *PLAN*.

- A. First, the Lord told Joshua to look by faith at the city of Jericho.
1. *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour."*
 2. Joshua had just been considering the city, and until that point all he could see were walls and sentries.
 3. It did not look like Jericho, its king or its mighty men were defeated or surrendering.
 4. But now, at the command of God, he was to look again, but this time with the eye of faith.
 5. It wasn't an exercise in mystical visualization. It was a look built on a trust in God's promise.
 6. The Lord was saying, *"Believe me, Joshua, I am putting this city and its inhabitants into your hands."*
- B. This is not easy, as I have been saying for weeks, but this is where the rubber meets the road.
1. This is where academic, theological faith, becomes practical, victorious faith.
 2. Let's trust God to march around this city, bringing its walls down, & rescuing repenting sinners, like Rahab.
 3. The omnipotent God has saved and revived entire communities in the past, and He can do it again today.
 4. The problem is in our lack of vision and lack of faith. We lack the expectation we should have.
- C. God shared with Joshua a plan of attack.
1. Obviously, there is nothing necessarily wrong with having a pattern to follow and following it.
 2. Noah was given a set of blueprints for the construction of the Ark. The exodus followed God's itinerary.
 3. The New Testament gives us the pattern for our evangelism & church planting; it's called the *Book of Acts*
 4. The problem is that Christians have a propensity to create their own plans, rather than following the Lord's.
 5. I am bent in that direction, trying to look ahead and plan ahead in my own weak wisdom.
- D. In this case, the plan began with the spiritual leaders of the nation.
1. Four strong priests were once again to pick up the Ark of the Covenant using the two poles which were laced through the rings at the corners.
 2. After our lesson on the crossing of the Jordan last week, I tried to learn how much the Ark weighed.
 - a. I found a variety of answers, ranging from 183 to 615 pounds, so I can't tell you how much it weighed.
 - b. But even at the lightest weight each priest would have been carrying 50 lbs., or as much as 150 lbs.
 - c. This was no easy task, considering how many hours they would have to carry it.
 3. And by the way, under the Mosaic law it wasn't supposed to be the priests carrying the Ark.
 - a. Rather it was usually the branch of the tribe of Levi called the Kohathites.
 - b. But these were special circumstances.
- E. Before the Ark, there were seven priests blowing trumpets made out of ram's horns.
1. Israel's military men might have marched in marshal unison – left, right, left, right.
 2. But then too, there were all their wives and families – the very young and the relatively old.
 3. And despite the sound of the trumpets, Israel was not to be singing or even talking among themselves.
 4. They were not to be responding to the curses and jeers of the Canaanites, which they probably couldn't understand anyway.
 5. There was supposed to be perfect quiet except for the sound of trumpets & the pounding of millions of feet.
 6. For six days, Israel was to circle the city once, but then on the seventh day they were to do it seven times.
 7. Upon the completion of the seventh circuit, and at the command to shout, the voices of the people joined the blast of the trumpet and the walls would fall flat, which they did.
 8. That was the plan, & because Joshua & Israel obeyed the Lord, Jericho was made absolutely vulnerable.
- F. I hope you can see the relationship between the *fall* of the city and the *obedience* of Israel.
1. I hope you can also see the relationship of *obedience* to the *faith* Israel had in the power of the Lord.
 2. We are never going to accomplish anything great for God unless we do things according to the pattern He has given to us, coupled to our trust in Him.
 3. Both ingredients must be there.

V. Consider now more specifically, faith's ACCOMPANIMENT.

- A. The ark of the covenant should be considered to be a symbol of the presence of God.
1. That gold-covered box, was certainly not the God of Israel, even though from time/time it was thought to be
 2. But with the presence of Ark in the midst of Israel's perambulation around the city, it told Jericho that God was there, and He was going to keep His word.
- B. Then even though the language of the chapter is a bit confusing, I believe that every man woman and child in Israel was a part of the parade.
1. I think that this is important. There was unity in the congregation of Israel.
 2. It is not that everyone had the same strong a faith that Joshua had.
 - a. Some, like the small children, had no faith at all. But they all participated anyway.
 3. It is like the memorial at Gilgal, some day those children will see the cairn made from the stones taken from the river, and they will be reminded of what the faith of their fathers had accomplished through God.
 4. Maybe, at Jericho, not everyone had a faith that was fully engaged in all of this. But later?
 5. Who could deny the power and blessing of the Lord?
 6. And yet, at the time, the congregation agreed to follow their leadership in obedience whether their faith was strong or weak.
- C. This is so very important.
1. Over and over again in the New Testament we see the importance of congregational unity.
 2. You may not agree with the leadership of undershepherd which the Lord has placed over your church.
 3. And no one is trying to become the pope or dictator over the congregation, but God often speaks to His Joshuas, telling them what to do and how to do it.
 4. It is important, with or without full agreement, that we all step out and follow his leadership.
 5. You may not understand or agree with what we are trying to do with an interdenominational church in Deer Park. But if you look, you should be able to see some walls inexplicably falling.
- D. The third ingredient of this accompaniment was the sound of the trumpet.
1. I admit to being somewhat confused about the purpose of the trumpets.
 2. Some statements seem to suggest that for the most part they were quiet, until the time to shout.
 3. Other verses seem to say that the trumpets were simply used to issue the command to move forward.
 - a. *"And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them" – verse 8.*
 4. And then there is the possibility that the trumpets were being blown all the time.
- E. In all of this, you may be thinking that some parts of this account are so ludicrous as to be impossible.
1. For example, there is the command of **verse 10** – *"And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout."*
 2. *"Pastor Oldfield, are you going to tell me that those mothers were able to keep all their children – thousands of them – silent?"*
 - a. I am not going to tell you that. I could say that God might have kept them all quiet, but I won't.
 - b. The truth is, I don't know for sure.
 - c. But I will say this, that just as not every one had the faith of Joshua – that the entire nation believed God.
 - d. I won't say that there wasn't a peep out of any Israelite, but generally speaking there was no speaking.
 - e. There was an effort to be obedient. And the mother of the crying baby was probably embarrassed.
 3. Even if there wasn't absolute silence, the Lord was pleased to bless the people's faith and efforts at obedience.

VI. And then there was faith's great VICTORY.

A. "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city."

1. We aren't told if the shout was one of victory or attack, but it was probably a noisy combination of both.
2. Then the walls of enemy "fell down flat."
 - a. They didn't crumble or fall inward or outward.
 - b. They fell flat, as though they were turned into dust.
3. Unbelieving Bible critics have tried to explain this away, talking about earthquake fault lines or the stomping in unison of thousands of human feet.
4. No, those things can't explain Jericho.
5. This was the feat of God, not of men – a miraculous feat of divine power and grace.
6. It was granted because Joshua believed God, and it was accounted unto him for victory.

- B. The enemy city fell and the unbelievers inside were executed, just as unbelievers will be condemned and executed at the great judgment of God.
1. But Rahab was saved, just as Joshua promised.
 2. Oh, and by the way, are you aware that "Joshua" is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament name: "Jesus?"
 3. I know that it's not the same thing, but I could say that Jesus kept his promise to save this woman.

VII. Conclusion

A. John Bunyan wrote more than one great story. His most famous, of course, was "Pilgrim's Progress."

1. One of this other books is called "The Holy War," and it features a community called "Mansoul" which he pictured as under attack.
2. I won't make a complete comparison with Bunyan's story, but there is a war being waged for men's souls.
3. And most of our neighbors have built walls, fortifications and block houses, for the defense of their souls.
4. They will do everything they can to keep Joshua's (Jesus') people at bay.
5. You and I are not going to be victorious against those cities without the blessing of the Captain of the host of the Lord.

B. There is a sense in which we need to be spiritually aggressive; we need to be on the offensive with the sword of the Spirit and the gospel of Christ.

1. But again, it is not by our strength, our wisdom, or our psychological or oratorical skills that sinners will surrender to the Holy Spirit.
2. We need the blessing of God.
3. And that means we need to approach our targets in faith, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring down the walls of opposition.