

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 6

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 6

Joshua 6:16 – *“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.”*

INTRODUCTION

A quick review of the preceding chapters is helpful: Joshua was called to lead Israel into the Promised Land (ch.1); Rahab's faith is a model (ch.2); The crossing of the Jordan River is miraculous (ch.3); the memorial twelve stones reminded Israel of the LORD God (ch.4); Israel needed to be spiritually prepared before conquest of Jericho (ch.5).

Chapter 6 gives an account of the fall of Jericho, which is quite well known to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Some are amused by it. Some question its historicity. Did the conquest of Jericho happen as it is written? Some professing Christians who are intimidated by the liberals try

to rationalize the incident away. Others take the account at face value that God did it on behalf of Israel in a supernatural way, as recorded in the Bible.

Another question that is often raised is the matter of ethics. Did God command the killing of all the inhabitants of Jericho except Rahab and her family? Is this the same God whom Jesus Christ came to reveal as merciful and compassionate? These are hard questions and they demand a response. It must be said at the very outset that a proper understanding of what actually happened would give us a correct knowledge of God's personality, and not a God who is the product of men's imagination and fabrication. A man-made god is no God at all but an idol.

But there are others who are spiritual and godly and fear God. These careful readers or students find the account of the fall of Jericho challenging and spiritually profitable. Taking the account at face value i.e. the event is real, the people are real, and the places are real, then the theological value is immeasurable. It helps us to know and understand God's sovereignty, God's ways, and God's character. And from a spiritual standpoint, the account illustrates principles of spiritual conflicts and victorious Christian living which are applicable today.

A broad outline of the chapter is as follows:

- 1) The LORD instructs Joshua (vv.1-5);
- 2) Joshua obeys the LORD (vv.6-11);
- 3) Jericho is dedicated to the LORD (vv.12-21);
- 4) Rahab and family are saved (vv.22-25);
- 5) The LORD is with Joshua (vv.26-27).

Let us prayerfully and diligently dig the Word and discover many spiritual things for our daily living.

COMMENTARY

The LORD Instructs Joshua – 6:1-5

Joshua stood in Gilgal looking westward not far away from where the fortified city of Jericho was. There the LORD appeared to him as “captain of the host of the LORD”. The inhabitants of Jericho completely shut themselves in. No one went out or entered the city. Rahab who lived in the city had earlier told the two spies that terror had stricken the inhabitants of the Land and their hearts “melt” because of Israel (2:9-11). The LORD, who appeared to Joshua, assured him: “I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king, and the mighty men of valour” (v.2). Note the perfect tense of the verb “to give”. It was important to Joshua because it promised victory and that the battle against Jericho had already been won. Note also the

extent of the victory. It would be a total victory – the people, the king and the city’s warriors would be destroyed. As far as Joshua was concerned, the LORD was saying that Jericho was as good as occupied by Israel. What was left for Joshua to do was to claim it. Jericho was not a big city which was about eight acres. But it was a very strongly fortified city. It was located in the Jordan valley. It controlled the way up the mountains which lie westward. Further up the mountains and inward was Ai, another city which they would have to take. If they took Ai, they would then be on top of the hill country and this would enable them to expand and claim the other parts of the Land.

This was the first city to be taken in the Land the LORD who would lead the children of Israel through Joshua. The LORD instructed Joshua on the strategy of taking Jericho. He and his soldiers were to walk around the wall of the city six times, once every day. Seven priests were to blow the “trumpets of ram’s horns.”¹ These priests who will blow the ram’s horns would walk in front of the ark, which naturally would be borne by other priests. On the seventh day, they must march around the wall seven times with the priests blowing their ram’s horns. Then at the end of the seventh march around the city, the priests who had the ram’s horns would

¹ Israelites used two kinds of trumpets –

blow a prolonged blast, and all the people would then shout loudly. The result was that the wall of the city would “fall down flat”, and make it easy and possible for the Israelites to enter the city.

Joshua Obeys the LORD – 6:6-11

Joshua obeyed the LORD. As a military man, he did not express shock or disbelief or offer any counter strategy to take Jericho. Joshua straightaway instructed the priests what to do, and the priests who were to carry the ark, and also told the armed Israeli soldiers their position in the procession. The arrangement for the march would take the following order: the armed soldiers to lead the march in front; the priests with the ram’s horns to be followed by the ark, the “rereward” (rearward) soldiers, and then the people (probably comprising men from the twelve tribes).²

Another significant thing that Joshua told the Israelites not to do was that they should not shout or make any noise or speak a word until he told them to do so, then they shall shout (v.10). This intimates that Joshua was quite aware that the proposed strategy to take over Jericho was humanly and militarily unconventional. But it was the LORD’S way and he humbly accepted it. Now he must ensure that his fellow

country men share the same thoughts and feelings. He knew what would happen if the unbelieving people were to murmur and ridicule the whole strategy. He had seen the LORD’S anger leveled against their forefathers at Kadesh-barnea. In order to ensure that they would submit to the LORD and be victorious, Israel must not sin by murmuring. Although they might look ridiculous and stupid by the people of Jericho, Joshua forbade them to speak as complaints and murmurings could easily infect the entire entourage. They were not to say anything until he gave the order to talk or shout.

The number “seven” which is mentioned so many times in this chapter should catch our attention. It occurs fourteen times (two times seven) in the first sixteen verses – seven priests, seven trumpets of ram’s horns, seven times around the city, and seven times on the seventh day. The number “seven” (Hebrew, *shevah*) seems to be a sacred number to the Israelites. The life of Israel revolves around the number “seven”: their Sabbath is celebrated on the seventh day of the week; seven weeks after the Passover is the Feast of the Firstfruits or Harvest (New Testament, Pentecost); and after forty-nine years (seven times seven) comes the Year of Jubilee (the sabbatical year, a time when the slaves are freed, debts cancelled, land returned to its original

² It was not expected for every woman and child to march around the city.

owner). In addition three of Israel's feasts fall in the seventh month of their calendar, namely, the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement.³ The study of biblical numerology strongly suggests that the number "seven" means "perfect" or "complete" and is associated with holiness, to be full or to be satisfied. God ended his work of creation on the seventh day. He blessed and sanctified (set apart) the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). This gives the number "seven" a sacred significance. Then there was the seven-branched candlestick of the Tabernacle in the Holy Place (Exodus 37:17-24). The Jews noted seven promises when God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3): the Land God would show him; make a great nation out of him; he would be blessed; his name would be great; he would be a blessing to others; others would be blessed if they bless him or be cursed if they curse him; and in him all families of the earth would be blessed!

Jericho Is Dedicated to the LORD – 6:12-21

The city was dedicated to the LORD. The word "accursed" in Hebrew is "cherem" which means "devoted to destruction, placement

under the divine curse or ban."⁴ It is commonly used in a causative sense meaning that which is dedicated or devoted to the LORD.⁵ Apparently Joshua had told the Israelites that the whole city was under the "cherem" or placed under the ban and all were to be devoted to the LORD (v.17). The person or persons who were exempted was "only Rahab, the harlot, . . .and all that are with her in the house" (v.17). All the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, were consecrated (holy, sacred) to the LORD (v.19).

When Joshua gave the signal for the people to shout, they obeyed. The people shouted when the priests blew a prolonged blast with their trumpets of ram's horns. The wall of Jericho fell down flat. The people entered the city and they "utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword" as the LORD had commanded (v.21). The whole city including all its inhabitants was devoted to God. In all things, the firstfruits belonged to God. If any of the Israelites were to take anything which was "cherem", he would make

⁴ Stephen D. Renn, editor, EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF BIBLE WORDS, under the heading: "dedicate, dedication", p.252.

⁵ Willem A. VanGerem, general editor, NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY & EXEGESIS, under "MIX", vol. 2, p. 276.

³ For details of these feasts see Leviticus 23.

himself a “cursed” and would collectively include the children of Israel (v.18). He would be charged with robbing the LORD.

This poses an ethical problem. It is hard to understand but a person must humble himself before God and accept God as He has revealed to us. The command to destroy everything was by the command of God. Joshua and the Israelites must not disobey. Therefore an understanding of God is essential to help one to understand this act. God has revealed that He is the Creator of all mankind (Genesis 1, 2). All humankind belongs to Him (Ecclesiastes 12:7). He has also revealed that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion (Romans 9:15-24). God is holy (Revelation 4:8). God does not tolerate sin, and the sinner will be punished with death (Romans 6:23). All men are under sin, and all have sinned and rebelled against God. There is none righteous, no not one, for there is none that understands and seeks after God. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:9-11, 18). Men therefore deserve death from God. In this regard, every human being is already condemned. In today’s terms, every man is already on death row, and he awaits his final punishment. It does not matter whether the death penalty is meted

out earlier, later or delayed. It makes very little difference.

The destruction of all the inhabitants of Jericho must be considered in this light. God had already warned Israel that the religion and practices of the Canaanites were an abomination to Him and they must destroy them lest they would learn the ways of the inhabitants and sin against God (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). Man must acknowledge his sin and plead for mercy from God. No matter how man criticizes the acts of God, or condemns Him, or rejects His existence, as far as He is concerned, nothing has changed. He self-exists, still exists, and will exist for ever as He declares concerning Himself: “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). There is God and it does not change His existence whether man acknowledges His existence or not. But be warned by the inspired writer to the Hebrews (Hebrew 10:31): “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Therefore, the judgement upon the inhabitants of Jericho was based on religious and not on political or military grounds. Just as God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sins, it was also appropriate that Jericho should be destroyed because of its sin. It was carried out to preserve Israel’s religious purity. Finally, if God is righteous and just as He reveals of Himself, He cannot be wrong, morally

or otherwise, in everything that He does.

Rahab and Family Are Saved
– 6:22-25

God showed mercy to Rahab, the harlot, and all the members of her family and any other persons who were with her in her house that day. Her house was built on the wall of Jericho. Yet when the wall of Jericho fell, apparently, that section of the wall that supported her house did not fall. Her house therefore remained intact. God performed the miracle and graciously protected and saved Rahab and all those who were in her house. The spies did not know the LORD'S strategy of defeating Jericho. It would appear that they did not have any difficulty locating Rahab's house. When the Israelites were destroying the city and its inhabitants, Rahab and the others were sitting anxiously in her house, and trusting that the LORD God of Israel would keep His promise. God kept His Word.

When the Israelites rescued her, she and her family members were left outside "the camp of Israel" (v.23). They could not join or be part of Israel as yet. She needed to be fully instructed in the religion and ways of the people of God, in spite of the fact that she showed initial faith in the living God. Then her male companions had to be circumcised and be assimilated into the community of Israel. They went through this preparation and eventually they were

accepted as full members of Israel. Later Rahab was married to Salmon, an ancestor of King David from whose lineage, the babe Jesus, our Saviour, was born! Some have intimated that Salmon could have been one of the two spies.

The LORD was with Joshua
– 6:26-27

Joshua put a curse on the city of Jericho. If any man rebuilt the city, his male children would die when he would lay the foundation of the city. This prophecy was fulfilled about five hundred years later. Hiel rebuilt Jericho and his firstborn Abiram died when he set up the foundation of the city, and his youngest son, Segub died setting up the gates (1 Kings 16:34).

As the events went so far, from the time the LORD anointed Joshua as His servant to lead the Israelites on the eastern side of the Jordan River till the conquest of Jericho, the LORD was with him. The LORD kept His promise and enabled him. Joshua's fame spread throughout the Land. There was more work to be done. Joshua needed to maintain his humility and fully trust and obey the LORD.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Jericho loomed strong and fortified before Joshua. Joshua was thinking how he could take the city. The LORD appeared to Joshua and assured him that the battle was the LORD'S and not his. The interesting part was that when Joshua and Israel were on the other side, the LORD did

not straightaway order them to invade Jericho. Sometimes the LORD'S work needs to be done in quick time, but in this instance, the LORD reveals that sometimes there are things that are more important and necessary to be attended to first before doing any other thing. Being patient and to delay with good reasons are sound principles in life's journey. More often than not, we need to prepare ourselves spiritually first before we embark on the Lord's work. The work requires us to get right with God. The next thing is that God's work must be done in God's way. This is illustrated in the way Jericho was taken. Charles H. Spurgeon said: "God wants His people to work, to wait, and to win." We as parents need to realize that teaching our children, and instructing them to learn the things and ways of the LORD is not a waste of time or a waste of life, or waste of good talent and ability.

People today are more materialistic and godless than before. Only 38 percent of Australians believe there is a personal God; 16 percent say that there is no God, 10 percent plead ignorance, and 36 percent believe something out there.⁶ One of the common criticisms against God is that there are two Gods, the God of the Old Testament who is merciless and wicked and the God of the New Testament who is loving and merciful. The non-believer who holds this false view can be excused because of his utter ignorance of the knowledge of God. But the Christian should not be

perturbed by such remarks. The only sure way of overthrowing such onslaughts is to know who God is by knowing His Word thoroughly. Remember what Paul said to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:16-17): *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.* Do not give up studying the Word of God for it will make you wise. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Joshua 6:1-5; Ephesians 1:3, 19-23.

TUESDAY: Joshua 6:6-11; Numbers 14:1-12; Psalm 46:1-11.

WEDNESDAY: Joshua 6:12-16; Hebrews 11:30; Psalm 98:1-4.

THURSDAY: Joshua 6:17-21; Leviticus 27:28-29; Deuteronomy 20:16-18.

FRIDAY: Joshua 6:22-27; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:37-39.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the LORD use the perfect tense in saying that He had given Jericho to Israel (verse 2)?

⁶ The AGE, Monday, April 3, 2006.

iv. The spies (vv. 22-23)

2. What task was assigned to the following in the defeat of Jericho?

i. The armed men (vv. 3, 9)

ii. The priests (vv. 4, 6)

iii. The people (vv. 5, 10, 21)

3. Do you have a problem with the total annihilation of all the inhabitants in Jericho? Give reason.

4. Is this a good way to destroy a city?

5. Why were the Israelites forbidden to take anything from the city of Jericho and then were permitted to take the rest of the cities for themselves?

6. What do you learn about God from the way Jericho was conquered and destroyed?
