

Jericho

Joshua 5:13-6:27
20.02.11

INTRODUCTION

The Israelites, led by Joshua, have crossed the River Jordan and were camped at Gilgal. It was here that the Lord commanded the Israelites to be circumcised.

They remained at the camp until they were healed.

Gilgal was on the eastern border of Jericho - the first major city that the Israelites had come to.

This morning we'll be looking at the fall of Jericho (5:13-6:27). Many of you will have heard the story many times.

I want you to be seeing this next part of the story through the eyes of the Crown today - what does this tell us? What can we learn from it? What does it reveal to?

JOSHUA & THE ARMED GUARD 5:13-15

So, we join the story with Joshua, who is scouting out the land to try and find out more about the Canaanites and the city of Jericho.

When he comes near to Jericho, he comes across another man with a drawn sword in his hand. This man is ready for battle..

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"
Joshua 5:13

Immediately Joshua asks:

"Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"
Joshua 5:14

Many believe that the armed man might be God in human form or Christ. It's possible that the man was an angel as throughout the bible, they are often sent on missions by God (Judges 6:11, 13:3) and identified as captains over the heavenly armies (Daniel 10:5, 20, 12:1).

Either way, Joshua's reaction is complete reverence and he falls face down asking:

"What message does my LORD have for His servant?"

15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.
Joshua 5:15

This is a really important section of the verses we're looking at today.

Think about it - Joshua and the Israelites have crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. Now Joshua was thinking eventually the time had come for the Israelites to strike at the heart of the Promise Land and reclaim it as theirs.

Joshua being a great commander of the army of Israel wants to be prepared for battle - so that he can lead his men into victory. So, he's gone to find out more about his enemy and the fortified city of Jericho. Joshua wants to get a bit of a head ups - to be the one in the know about the enemy.

As he's doing this, he comes across the commander of the Lord's army - who is standing with his sword out and ready to battle!

Immediately, we get a view of the big picture.

Joshua, had in his mind that now God had brought them into the Promised Land, his army of Israelites were going to claim it back from the enemy in battle.

But the big picture is it wasn't just the men of Israel battling against the men of Jericho, it was the whole army of the LORD battling against the men Jericho!

Often we can become so focussed on the small scale - the things that are affecting us individually, we came become blind to the big picture.

The Commander of the army of the LORD was not fighting for Joshua or the people of Israel - that's why he answered "Neither". He was fighting for the LORD. Reclaiming the Promised Land from those who did not follow the LORD.

All of a sudden, the story isn't just about the people of Israel battling the people of Jericho to win the right to live in a certain part of land, it's a story about the living God passing judgement on a people who have turned away from Him.

Jericho just happens to be the first city in this land that the LORD was taking action against.

Joshua, all of a sudden has the same revelation - this battle is not his to fight and win, it's the LORD's.

"What message does my LORD have for his servant?"

Whilst Joshua is the Commander of the army of Israel - he is first and foremost a servant to the living God ready to serve as He needs.

JOSHUA PLACES HIS TRUST IN THE LORD.

The Commander of the army of the LORD tells Joshua that the place where he stands is holy and he should remove his sandals. Joshua does this.

This tells us that the presence of God is with them.

Can you remember when Moses came before the burning bush in Exodus? The LORD gave Moses the command to confront Pharaoh about releasing the people of Israel, Joshua was now to receive his commands from the LORD.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.
Joshua 6:2

The battle is won!

Joshua has not even drawn his sword and the LORD has already defeated Jericho, its king and all of its fighting men!

Before this encounter, Joshua would have been thinking long and hard about this first battle in the Promised Land against Jericho. He would have been assessing the strategy of battle - what would be the best way to attack? How were they going to get over those walls? Should the attack be focussed in one area, or attack on all fronts? How would they even get close to the walls? How big was the army of Jericho inside those walls? What weapons would the army of Jericho use against them? Joshua's mind would have been racing because he was the commander of the army of Israel and he would have felt the lives of his men were his responsibility.

But yet, here he was, being told by the LORD that He has already delivered Jericho into his hands!?!

Joshua was probably utterly amazing but a little bewildering because as he looked down on Jericho it still looked to be standing.

The gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

Joshua 6:1

FEARFUL JERICHO

6:1

Right from the start of the Book of Joshua, we have been aware that the various cities, kings and tribes occupying the Promised Land knew that the people of Israel were on their way to reclaiming the Promised Land but, even more scary, was that the living God was with them (5:1).

Joshua knew when he took over from Moses and was tasked with taking the Israelites into the Promised Land, that Jericho was going to be the key city - that's why in Chapter 2, he asked the two spies he sent into the Promised Land to:

"Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho."

Joshua 2:1

And the King of Jericho also knew it:

The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."

Joshua 2:2

The entire nation of Canaanite knew what was coming. Rahab, the prostitute who protected the spies told them:

"I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

Joshua 2:9-11

Jericho was a key city because of its location within the Promised Land. It was centrally positioned and so defeating Jericho would have divided the country into two halves, meaning that it would be harder for all of Canaan to unite against the Israelites.

Essentially, defeating Jericho would be like driving a wedge into the heart of Canaan.

The King of Jericho knew all of this and so ordered the city gates to be locked up - allowing no one in or out - how could the army of Jericho fight and win against the living God.

In the eyes of the Canaanites, the battle was already won - Jericho defeated, Israel victorious. They knew that the LORD was fighting the battles of the Israelites and nothing could stop Him.

Joshua, however had still be thinking of what he and the army of Israel must do to defeat Jericho. The LORD was one or two steps ahead of Joshua and had a plan...

WHAT TO DO

6:2-5

Jericho was a fortified city, this meant that it was built to defend the land of Canaan against attack from countries to the east of the river Jordan.

Jericho was built upon a hill and around the hill were two large city walls. An inner and an outer wall (section). Each of the walls themselves were massive - they were each about 30ft (10m) high and about 6ft (2m) wide. Between these walls was an area where poor people built their homes and lived because they couldn't afford or didn't have the social status to be able to live within the inner city but wanted to make sure that they were within the outer wall so that they were protected if the area was attacked. As a result, lots of people lived in this area and often built on top of one another!

It was in this area that Rahab the prostitute lived and early in Joshua it tells us that her house was actually part of the city wall (2:15).

This was probably one of the biggest concerns Joshua had - how were they going to get passed the walls...

God tells Joshua what to he must do to bring down the walls:

"March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

Joshua 6:3-5

Simple then!?!?

JOSHUA HEARS THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD

Joshua goes back gathers the priests and army around him and tells them what God's plan is.

Why did God command the priests to lead the ark around the city of Jericho with only the sound of the horns?

There was to be no one shouting out to the people of Jericho about their inevitable destruction. There was to be no calls requesting they surrender. They were simply to walk around the city once a day for 6 days blowing the horns, and then 7on the 7th day walk around the city 7 times. Only on the

last day when the trumpets blow a long blast are the people to cry out, upon which the walls of Jericho would fall.

The sound of trumpets is often used in the Bible to announce the presence of the LORD.

In the book of Exodus, when Moses and the people of Israel are at the foot of Mount Sinai, the LORD's presence is signified by the sound of trumpets and the whole mountain trembled violently:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

Exodus 19:16-19

When the people of Israel first heard the sound of the presence of the LORD - they trembled with fear - and God was on their side. Imagine then, the fear that would strike at the hearts of the people of Jericho and the sound of the trumpets announced the presence of the LORD!

The trumpets they used are called Shofar and we're used for religious ceremonies.

SOUND OF SHOFAR

Those of you who watched the South African Word cup might remember the sound of the Vuvazelas!

The priests were to walk in front of the ark of the covenant, blowing the Shofar's around the walls of Jericho - announcing the presence of the LORD.

THE FALL OF JERICHO

6:11-17

So he [Joshua] had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

Joshua 6:11-14

Can you imagine what the people of Jericho must have been thinking and feeling?

For six days they saw the ark of the covenant, led out of the camp by the seven priests and walked around the city walls, with the sound of the trumpets blasting.

Although the people of Jericho were able to lock the gates, they were not able to hide from the noise as it moved around their city behind the huge walls.

Each and everyday their fear would have grown - the Israelites army was not going away.

They must have also bit confused - what sort of attack was this? Normally, invading armies try and break down the gates or climb the walls. The attacking army often shout out war cries.

These Israelites aren't doing any of that?!? They're simply leading the ark of the covenant around the city each day blowing the trumpets - and as they do this, their army following in silence - no war cries, no threats, no insults - just silence.

Each morning the people of Jericho must have been waiting to see if the trumpets sounded out - meaning that perhaps the Israelites and, more importantly, their God, had moved on.

But it didn't happen.

Each of the six days, the seven priests and their trumpets sounded as they led the ark around the city.

By my estimations, it would have taken the priests, ark and the army about 1hr to walk around the city carrying the ark. That meant that for an hour each day, the people of Jericho would hear the sound of the trumpets - they couldn't escape it and it filled them with dread.

I imagine that they would have felt like people the people of Britain did during World War II when the air raid sirens went off warning that the German bombers were on they're way - a warning that signified danger, destruction and death was on the way.

Isn't it strange though how the people of Jericho responded to this immanent war with the living God - creator of all!

Not once are we told in those 6 days did the people of Jericho send out to the Israelites a group of people who tried to make peace with them or God.

Jesus tells a parable in Luke:

"Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace."

Luke 14: 31-32

If the King of Jericho had considered the options surely he would have seen that in a battle against the LORD - no matter how many men he had or how high his walls were, he was facing certain defeat. Surely then, he could have sent out a group of peace talkers to try and reconcile him and his people with the Israelites and the LORD.

Perhaps if the people of Jericho surrendered completely to the living God and trusted in Him rather than their own ways -they would have been saved from destruction. Just like Rahab - the prostitute (Chapter 2) - she acknowledge God and she was not only saved but welcomed into the people of Israel.

For six days, the LORD announced that He was coming, for six days He patiently gave the people of Jericho a window for making peace. But the gates remained locked and no peace was made.

And so we come to the 7th day and something different happened. The trumpet sound did not stop after the hour, as on the previous 6 days - it kept on going - and going and going.

On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times.

Joshua 6:15

The army of Israel and their living God did not stop after circling the city once this time, they kept on going, walking in silence, with only the sound of the trumpets blasting.

And it continued for seven hours, The people of Jericho must have known something serious was going to happen. Then there was one long blast...

The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD."

Joshua 6:16-17

And the voices of the army of Israel rose - claiming the city of Jericho for the LORD!

All of a sudden, the war cries of 40,000 men outside the walls of would have echoed through the streets of Jericho.

And as the Israelite's shouting rose, the walls that stood between the people of Jericho and the army of the LORD came crashing down.

When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

Joshua 6:20

JOSHUA FOLLOWED THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD

The air must have been thick with the war cries of the Israelite army and the cries of fear from the people of Jericho. The ground and buildings violently trembled as the walls collapsed around them.

For seven days, the people of Jericho had feared what would happen to them, for seven days they had trusted in the walls that surrounded them, and now those walls had collapsed and were no more.

The living God that had set His people free from the tight grip of the Egyptian Pharaoh, the living God who dried up the Red Sea to bring His people away from Egypt, the living God who had led His people though the dessert for 40 years - providing them food and water, the living God who had allowed the Israelites to destroy other kings and cities, the living God who separated the River Jordan to bring His people into their Promised Land, the living God who is the God of heaven above and on the earth below - that living God, was now bringing down the walls of Jericho.

The people of Jericho melted in the fear of the living God - there was nothing that they could do and they knew it. The Israelite army entered straight into the city of Jericho, swords ready:

They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

Joshua 6:21

All where destroyed and devoted to the LORD.

All except that is for Rahab and all who were with her in her house. The prostitute who had earlier on in Joshua, turned to God and trusted in Him, protecting the spies from the Israelite army.

Rahab and the spies had made an oath - Rahab was to tie the red cord which she used let down the spies over in the city wall to her window, then when destruction came upon Jericho, she and those with her would be protected (Joshua 2:15-20). Now we see the faithfulness of the LORD and that oath honoured.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

Rahab had tied the scarlet rope to her window and her house as agreed, although part of the city wall, and it was not destroyed. Rahab and her family were kept safe from the destruction. Just as the oath was agreed. Once the spies had collected Rahab and her family, the city was burnt as a dedication to the LORD.

Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Joshua 6:22-26

WARNING!

6:17-19

Something to remember for next week, when Jon is preaching, is that before the Israelites entered the city of Jericho, Joshua gave them this warning:

"Keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury."

Joshua 6:18-19

Absolutely everything in Jericho, except Rahab and her family, were to be dedicated to the LORD.

Jericho and everything in it was the first city in the Promised Land which was taken back from the Canaanites, and just like the first born or the first crops of the harvest, the people of Israel were to dedicate it to the LORD.

There will be more on that next week though...!

GLORY TO THE LORD

6:20-21, 24-27

So the walls of Jericho had come crashing down and the city, its king, fighters and people were defeated. The people of Israel dedicated the city of Jericho to the LORD through its destruction.

JOSHUA PROCLAIMED THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

At the start of this morning and Chapter 6, the LORD said to Joshua:

"See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands. Along with its king and fighting men."

Joshua 6:2

The LORD declared this to Joshua before a single sword from the Israelite army had been drawn against Jericho the LORD had won the battle.

Before Joshua had formed a plan, the LORD knew exactly what needed to happen.

Before Joshua had even had a chance to think up a strategy of getting over the walls, the LORD knew that he was going to bring them down.

Jericho was the first city within the Promised Land to be reclaimed by the LORD and dedicated to Him.

The people of Israel had been in the desert for 40 years, now they were coming into the Promise Land and the LORD was with them.

And not only was the LORD with them, but he was ahead of them.

It was the LORD who announced his presence for six days warning the people of the destruction coming.

It was the LORD who on the 7th day, brought down the walls and won the battle of Jericho.

It was the LORD who received Jericho as a dedication, the first city won.

So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land
Joshua 6:27

It's one of the simplest verses in the Bible but also one of my most favourites - because of its simplicity and complete utter truth:

"It is finished."
John 19:30

Jesus said this on the cross and then gave up His final breath.

Just as the LORD declared to Joshua before the battle, "I have delivered Jericho into your hands.", so too Jesus says to us "It is finished."

He has won the battle already for us.

No longer do we have to look at those massive, impossible walls the enemy keeps putting in front of us - all we need to do is, like Joshua:

- TRUST HIM
- HEAR HIM
- FOLLOW HIM
- PROCLAIM HIM

Martin has spoken about how we as a church have been through a desert period the last few years but that now it feels like God is bringing us into the Promised Land.

Well, just like Joshua and the people of Israel who had just arrived into the Promised Land, it wasn't plain sailing once they'd crossed the River Jordan. There were many battles, struggles and fights along the way. But the LORD stayed with Joshua and he went on to defeat 24 other Kings.

The LORD will do the same for us, individually and as a church - there are lots of enemies out there. But as we put our trust in Him, we will hear His commands, His guidance, His plans. And if we follow them and proclaim our LORD our enemies hearts will melt in the fear of the LORD as they hear his trumpet sound and know that He is LORD and that He has won the battle.

Non-Christians - are you hearing the trumpet of the LORD?