

Prophet of Conquest

Joshua 5:13-6:5, 15-16, 20

SS Lesson for 03/14/2021

Devotional Scripture: Heb 11:23-31

OUTLINE

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Key Verse: Joshua 6:2

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Determining good or evil through seeking the ability from God (1 Kings 3:9)

Determining good or evil through godly knowledge (Phil 1:9-10)

Determining good or evil through spiritual testing (1 Thess 5:21)

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Conquer the impossible because nothing is too hard for God (Jer 32:17)

Conquer the impossible because nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37)

Conquer the impossible through persistence in faith (Matt 17:20)

Plan that may be misunderstood (3-4)

Misunderstood because God's plans are too numerous to understand (Ps 40:5)

Misunderstood because of ignorance (Eph 4:18)

Misunderstood because of not having the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14)

Misunderstood because of not having wisdom or revelation from the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17)

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Obedience in every detail regardless of interpretation of what must be done (1 Sam 15:13-15)

Obedience in every detail because just one variance is sin (James 2:10)

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We think of Joshua's role as a military commander before that of being a prophet—if we think of him at all as a prophet. He is remembered much more for his actions with the sword than for his proclamations of God's messages to the Israelites. But was Joshua a prophet? For one thing, he was Moses' successor, and Moses was called "a prophet" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Further, God spoke through Joshua to give directions to Israel, and that is one characteristic of a prophet (Hebrews 1:1). Joshua challenged the people to put away their idols and commit themselves fully to the Lord (Joshua 23:1-24:28), a common task of prophets. And Joshua may be considered a prophetic forerunner of Christ. The names Joshua and Jesus both mean "the Lord is salvation." As Joshua led ancient Israel into the promised land of Canaan, Jesus leads generations of God's faithful people into the promised land of Heaven. The first mention of Joshua in Scripture is in Exodus 17:8-16, a context not long after the exodus and the parting of the Red Sea. So by the time of the events of today's lesson text, Joshua had witnessed many mighty works of God. The book of Joshua begins with the Lord's exhortations to Joshua following Moses' death—repeating several times the directive for Joshua to be strong and have courage in fulfilling his sacred duties (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18). Joshua had been assured of the Lord's presence, just as the Lord had guided Moses (3:7). God's presence with Joshua also points to Joshua's calling from God, an event that precedes a true prophet's ministry. The book of Joshua goes on to trace the Israelite's entry into the promised land (Joshua 1-5), conquests and settlements in it (chapters 6-21), and covenant renewal (chapters 22-24). Christians have come to consider the book of Joshua to fit the category of "history" in the Old Testament's 5-12-5-5-12 arrangement of its 39 books (5 books of law, 12 of history, 5 of poetry, 5 by major prophets, 12 by minor prophets). But to Jewish readers the book of Joshua was part of the Former Prophets (along with Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings). Though the Former Prophets are very different from Latter Prophets (like Isaiah or Hosea), these books are concerned with God's guiding the people through his chosen leaders. The first such leader in this section was Joshua, followed by the judges, etc. The writer of the book is unknown, though it is likely he was a prophet or a priest himself. Joshua 3-4 records how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land, much as the previous generation had crossed the Red Sea on dry land under Moses' leadership. Following further spiritual preparation of the people—including circumcision of those men who had not been circumcised during the wandering in the wilderness (Joshua 5:2-9) and through the observance of the Passover (5:10)—the Israelites were almost ready for the task of conquering the promised land.

Key Verse: Joshua 6:2

And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

5:13. It seemed obvious that the next step would be the capture of **Jericho**. But since no divine message of instruction had yet come to **Joshua** (as before the crossing of the Jordan), he went out to reconnoiter the seemingly impregnable city. Was Joshua perplexed as he viewed the secure walls of Jericho? The spies reported at Kadesh Barnea that the cities of Canaan were "large, with walls up to the sky" (Deut. 1:28). Despite Joshua's long military experience he had never led an attack on a fortified city that was prepared for a long siege. In fact, of all the walled cities in Palestine, Jericho was probably the most invincible. There was also the question of armaments. Israel's army had no siege engines, no battering rams, no catapults, and no moving towers. Their only weapons were slings, arrows, and spears—which were like straws against the walls of Jericho. Joshua knew the battle of Jericho must be won because, now that they had crossed the Jordan, Israel's troops had no place to which they could retreat. Further, they could not bypass the city because that would leave their women, children, goods, and cattle at Gilgal exposed to

certain destruction. Pondering these heavy thoughts, Joshua was startled when something came across his sphere of vision. **He lifted up** his eyes to see a Soldier brandishing His **sword**. Instinctively he challenged the Stranger, saying in effect, “Who goes there—friend or foe?” If He were a friend, an Israelite, He was off limits and had some explaining to do. Especially was this true since Joshua had given no command for anyone to draw a sword! If the Stranger were an enemy, **Joshua** was ready to fight!

5:14. The response was startling and revealing. Something occurred that convinced Joshua this was no mortal soldier. As with Abraham under the oak at Mamre, Jacob at Peniel, Moses at the burning bush, and the two disciples at Emmaus, there was a flash of revelation and Joshua knew he was in the presence of God. It seems clear that Joshua was indeed talking to the Angel of the Lord, another appearance in Old Testament times of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (cf. 6:2). The **Commander of the army of the LORD** stood **with a drawn** sword, indicating that He would fight with and for Israel. But the sword also shows that God’s long-suffering delay of judgment was over and the iniquity of the Amorites was now full (cf. Gen. 15:16). The Israelites were to be the instruments by whom judicial punishment would fall. What kind of a military force did this divine Commander lead? The “army of the LORD” was surely not limited to the army of Israel though it may have been included. More specifically, it referred to the angelic host, the same “army” of heaven that later surrounded Dothan when Elisha and his servant appeared to be greatly outnumbered by the Aramean army (2 Kings 6:8-17). In the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of His arrest, Jesus referred to this heavenly army when He said that 12 legions of angels were ready to defend Him (Matt. 26:53). In Hebrews 1:14 they are described as “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” Though invisible, they serve and care for God’s children in times of great need. **Joshua**, recognizing his heavenly visitor with the drawn sword, **fell** on his face and worshiped, saying, in effect, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.”

5:15. The reply of the Lord to Joshua was brief but urgent. Remove **your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy**. The presence of the holy God sanctified this spot in a strange and defiled land (cf. a similar command to Moses, Ex. 3:5). This was a deeply significant experience for Joshua. He had anticipated a battle between two opposing armies, Israelite and Canaanite. He had thought this was to be his war and that he was to be the general-in-charge. But then he confronted the divine Commander and learned that the battle was the Lord’s. The top general **of the LORD’s army** had not come to be an idle Spectator of the conflict, or even an ally. He was in complete charge and would shortly reveal His plans for capturing the citadel of Jericho. How comforting all this was for **Joshua**. He did not need to bear the heavy burden and responsibility of leadership alone. By removing his sandals he gladly acknowledged that this battle and the entire conquest of Canaan was God’s conflict and that he was merely God’s servant.

6:1. **Jericho** was a beleaguered city. Orders had been given to close all the gates, and no traffic was permitted **in** or **out**. As Rahab had disclosed to the spies (2:11) the residents of Jericho were filled with terror because of **the** advancing **Israelites** (cf. 5:1).

6:2. But there this impressive fortress stood, in full view of Joshua whose conversation with the Commander of the Lord’s army continued. This Commander, **the LORD** Himself, promised victory to **Joshua** and announced that He had given **Jericho into his hands**. The city, **its king**, and its army would all fall to Israel. The tense of the Hebrew verb is prophetic perfect (**I have delivered**), describing a future action as if it were already accomplished. Since God had declared it, the victory was assured.

6:3-5. The battle plan Joshua was to use was most unusual. Ordinary weapons of war such as battering rams and scaling ladders were not to be employed. Rather Joshua and his **armed men** were to **march around the city once** a day for **six successive days** with **seven priests** blowing **trumpets** preceding **the ark** of the covenant. **On the seventh day** they were to circle Jericho **seven times** and then **the wall of Jericho would collapse** and the city would be taken. In the Bible the number seven often symbolizes completeness or perfection. There were seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits of the wall on the seventh day. Though God’s plan of action may have seemed foolish to men it was the perfect scheme for this battle. What was the significance of the blaring **trumpets**? These instruments were “jubilee trumpets” (lit. Heb.) used in connection with Israel’s solemn feasts to proclaim the presence of God (Num. 10:10). The conquest of Jericho was not therefore exclusively a military undertaking but also a religious one, and the trumpets declared that the Lord of heaven and earth was weaving His invisible way around this doomed city. God Himself, in effect, was saying in the long blasts of these priestly trumpets, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in” (Ps. 24:7). When Christ returns, He, the King of glory, will enter cities in triumph. The conquest of Jericho was a similar kind of triumphant victory.

6:6-7. No battle strategy appeared more unreasonable than this one. What was to prevent the army of Jericho from raining arrows and spears down on the defenseless Israelites pursuing their silent march? Or who could stop the enemy from rushing out of the city gates to break up Israel's line, separating and then slaughtering them? **Joshua** was an experienced military leader. Certainly these and similar objections to the divine strategy flashed into his mind. But unlike Moses at the burning bush who argued with lengthy eloquence against the Lord's plan (cf. Ex. 3:11-4:17) Joshua responded with an unquestioning obedience. He lost no time in calling together **the priests** and soldiers, passing on to them the directions he had received from his Commander-in-chief.

6:8-9. It was perhaps a little after dawn when a long procession began to unwind out of the camp of Israel. First came **the armed guard** marching under tribal banners, then **seven priests** with **trumpets**; next **the ark** of God, and last **the rear guard**. The army thus had prominent places in the procession but Jericho would fall not through their prowess but because of the power of God.

6:10-11. Preserving absolute silence (except for the seven priests blowing their trumpets) this strange parade made its way toward Jericho and then **around the city** like a serpent. Jericho then covered about eight or nine acres and required less than 30 minutes to march around. When the circuit was completed, to the amazement of the Canaanites who probably anticipated an immediate attack, the Israelites **returned quietly to camp**.

6:12-14. The same procedure was followed **for six days**. No fortress had ever been conquered in this fashion. This strange strategy was probably given to test the faith of **Joshua**. He did not question; he trusted and obeyed. This procedure was also designed to test Israel's obedience to God's will. And that was not easy in this case. Every day they were exposing themselves to ridicule and danger. A Jericho soldier may have looked down from the wall on the army of Israel and asked, "Do they think they can frighten us into surrender by the sound of their rams' horns?" And the rest may have joined in a loud chorus of raucous laughter. Probably the Israelites received their orders on a daily basis so that their obedience was not a once-for-all matter but a new challenge every morning. That is the way God often deals with His children. They are required to do their "daily march" with little or no knowledge of tomorrow (Prov. 27:1; James 4:14; cf. Matt. 6:34). The faith of the Israelites triumphed over their fear that the enemy would attack. They also triumphed over any expectation of ridicule and scorn. Never before and seldom after this historic event did the thermometer of faith rise this high in Israel.

6:15-20a. On that fateful **seventh day** the procession made the circuit of the walls **seven times**. This parade—consisting of the armed guard, the seven **trumpet-blowing priests**, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, and the rear guard—may have taken about three hours. (On the word **devoted** in vv. 17-18 see v. 21.) (As Joshua recorded, Israel experienced disastrous consequences because of an immediate violation of God's instruction in vv. 18-19.) At the end of the seventh circuit the clear voice of **Joshua** rang out, **Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!** Also he told them to spare **Rahab** and her family (cf. 2:8-13). So when the priests blasted on **the trumpets... the people gave a loud shout**. That shout reverberated through the hills around, startling wild animals and terrorizing the dwellers of Jericho in their homes. At that moment **the wall** of Jericho, obeying the summons of God, **collapsed** (lit., "fell in its place").

6:20b-21. The men of Israel clambered over the debris. Finding the inhabitants paralyzed with terror and unable to resist, the soldiers utterly destroyed all human and animal life in Jericho, except for Rahab and her household (cf. v. 17). Though critics have charged that this destruction is a blemish on the Old Testament, it is clear that Israel was acting on divine command. The responsibility for this destruction rests therefore with God and not the Israelites. The city of Jericho and everything in it was "to be devoted (*ḥērem*) to the Lord" (v. 17). The NASB renders those words "shall be under the ban," a more literal translation. Verse 21 includes a verb form of that noun *ḥērem*: **They devoted** (*wayyahaḥrāmū*, from *ḥāram*) **the city to the LORD**. The idea is that the city's contents were to be given over to the Lord by totally destroying them. To convey this, the NIV adds **and destroyed**. (The verb *ḥāram* is trans. "totally destroyed" in 10:28, 35, 37, 39-40; 11:11-12, 21 and "destroy them totally" in 11:20; cf. 1 Sam. 15:3, 8-9, 15, 18, 20. The noun *ḥērem* is trans. "devoted" or "devoted things" in Josh. 6:17-18; 7:1, 11-12, 15; 1 Sam. 15:21; "devoted to destruction" in Lev. 27:29; "set apart for destruction" in Deut. 7:26. Sometimes, however, the idea of destruction is not in the word; cf., e.g., Lev. 27:21, 28.) The contents of Jericho were to be given "to the LORD" as the firstfruits of the land. Just as the firstfruits of a crop, given to the Lord, pointed to more crops to come, so the conquest of Jericho signified that Israel would receive all of Canaan from Him. No loot from Jericho was to be taken by the people. In carrying out the *ḥērem*, people and animals were to be killed (Josh. 6:17, 21), and other things were either to be destroyed or set apart, as in

this case, for the purposes of the sanctuary. These items included “silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron” (v. 19). All was “devoted” either to destruction or to the Lord’s “treasury”; all was to be forfeited by the people. Furthermore, God has the right to visit judgment on individuals and nations in sin. Is there evidence that the iniquity of the Canaanites was full? Few would question that the idolatrous worship and licentious lifestyle attested by archeological discoveries (e.g., the Ras Shamra tablets) justified the divine judgment on Jericho. Finally, God’s purpose was to bless the nation of Israel in the land and to use her as a channel of blessing to the world. But this would be greatly hindered if they were infected by the degenerate religion of the Canaanites. Gleason Archer declares, “In view of the corrupting influence of the Canaanite religion, especially with its religious prostitution... and infant sacrifice, it was impossible for pure faith and worship to be maintained in Israel except by the complete elimination of the Canaanites themselves” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964, p. 261). Sin is desperately contagious. To compromise with evil is dangerous and invites spiritual disaster. Various suggestions have been made as to why the walls of Jericho fell at the precise moment when the people shouted: (1) An earthquake caused the destruction. (2) Israelite soldiers undermined the walls while the others marched. (3) Vibrations set up by the trumpet blasts and soldiers’ shouts caused the collapse. (4) Shock waves caused by the marching feet of the Israelites were responsible. However, it was a supernatural event. This is clear from the fact that all the wall was destroyed except the portion by the house of Rahab. Actually it is unnecessary to determine the exact means God employed in this or any other miracle. A New Testament writer, reviewing this event centuries later, was content to write, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days” (Heb. 11:30). Archeological evidence for the collapse of Jericho’s walls in Joshua’s day is not as clear as was once supposed. This can be explained by the fact that further excavations have determined that in its long history Jericho has had some 34 walls. (Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. Many archeologists hold that it was inhabited as early as 7000 B.C.) The many earthquakes in the area, the thoroughness of Joshua’s destruction of the city, and the process of erosion over five centuries until it was refortified in Ahab’s time (1 Kings 16:34) also contributed to the meager remains and the extreme difficulty of relating these remains to the time of Joshua’s attack. The most significant evidence seems to be extensive pottery remains found on the mound and in the tombs of the area. These findings point to an occupancy of Jericho until about 1400 B.C. Under the pottery is a thick burned layer of ash representing a major destruction. This no doubt points to Joshua’s destruction and burning (Josh. 6:24) of the city. (For a thorough discussion of the archeology of Old Testament Jericho, see Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, pp. 94-9.)

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Encounter with the Commander (Josh 5:13-15)

5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

14 So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

15 Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.

Determining good or evil (13)

Determining good or evil through use of God's Word (Heb 5:14)

14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Determining good or evil through seeking the ability from God (1 Kings 3:9)

9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

Determining good or evil through godly knowledge (Phil 1:9-10)

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

Determining good or evil through spiritual testing (1 Thess 5:21)

21 Test everything. Hold on to the good.

Submitting to authorities (14)

Submit to authorities because God established them (Rom 13:1)

1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Submit to authorities because it is a command of God (Titus 3:1)

1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,

Submit to authorities out of reverence for Jesus (Eph 5:21)

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submit to authorities because they are there to administer justice (1 Peter 2:13-14)

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Respecting holiness (15)

Respect holiness because of the influence of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)

21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Respect holiness because it is pure (Ps 119:140)

140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

Respect holiness because it is full of justice and goodness (Rom 7:12)

12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Respect holiness because God imputes holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16)

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Receiving God's Plan (Josh 6:1-5)

6:1 Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

2 And the Lord said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.

3 You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.

4 And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

5 It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

Plan to conquer the seemingly impossible (1-2)

Conquer the impossible because God's plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2)

2 "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

Conquer the impossible because nothing is too hard for God (Jer 32:17)

17 "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Conquer the impossible because nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37)

37 For nothing is impossible with God."

Conquer the impossible through persistence in faith (Matt 17:20)

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Plan that may be misunderstood (3-4)

Misunderstood because God's plans are too numerous to understand (Ps 40:5)

5 Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

Misunderstood because of ignorance (Eph 4:18)

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Misunderstood because of not having the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14)

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Misunderstood because of not having wisdom or revelation from the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17)

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Plan of action (5)

Action that is more than saying Lord, Lord (Matt 7:21)

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Action that is doing God's Will (Matt 12:50)

50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Action that is keeping the Word of God (Luke 11:28)

28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Action that is justified by doing God's Word (Rom 2:13)

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Obeying God's Plan (Josh 6:15-16, 20)

15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times.

16 And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!"

20 So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

Obedience in every detail (15-16)

Obedience in every detail means fully complied with (Exodus 19:5)

5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,

Obedience in every detail means following exactly divine instructions (Heb 8:5)

5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Obedience in every detail regardless of interpretation of what must be done (1 Sam 15:13-15)

13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions."

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" 15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

Obedience in every detail because just one variance is sin (James 2:10)

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Obedience results in victory (20)

Victory in life and death through Jesus (Phil 1:21)

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Victory because of overcoming the world (1 John 5:4-5)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Victory over the sting of death through Jesus (1 Cor 15:56-57)

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Victory because God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from J. Hampton Keathley

The Plan or Strategy for Victory (6:1-7)

1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2 And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. 3 And you shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 And it shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead.”

6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD.” 7 Then he said to the people, “Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD.”

If Joshua had met with his military advisors, no one would have come up with this plan. The plan set forth by the Lord in chapter 6 certainly illustrates the principle of a number of passages from the Bible like Proverbs 14:12 and Isaiah 55:8f. God’s plan of salvation and deliverance is not a plan that man would design if he could or could if he would because of his basic alienation from God and proneness to depend on his own solutions. So today, men are prone to believe in a plan of salvation and sanctification that in some way or another introduces works into the equation rather than *faith alone in Christ alone*. Such a gospel is called by some *easy believism* when the truth is simple trust in Christ is not easy; it goes against the very grain of man’s makeup.

The directions given to Joshua by God for the conquest of Jericho obviously seem strange when compared to any human strategy men would devise, but only if we fail to think in biblical terms of the life of faith and man’s inherent inability to accomplish his own salvation or sanctification. Joshua 6, therefore, illustrates several vital concepts for walking by faith and dealing with the spiritual enemies we face in this life.

The Preparations of Jericho (vs. 1)

Verse 1 is a parenthesis designed to introduce us to the plan for the overthrow of Jericho, but in the process, it shows us how Jericho, having stopped its normal activities, was preparing for a siege by Israel, but undoubtedly fearful with melted hearts because of the mighty works of God. They knew about the Red Sea and they had surely heard about the miracle at Jordan.

The Promise From the Lord (vs. 2)

Before the Lord outlined His plan, He graciously assured Joshua of victory. Note the emphasis: “See, I have given.” Joshua was commanded to see, understand, and so reflect on the fact, as a matter of confidence, that *Yahweh* had already given them victory. Victory is always by the Lord’s hand, and since victory is by God’s power, we should expect it to be something that bypasses dependence on man and his own strength or abilities. So with the word “see” Joshua is called to see with eyes of faith and to envision Jericho as destroyed. Likewise over and over again in the New Testament, we are assured of our triumph over sin and Satan. “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14). See also Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:6-15.

The words “have given” represent a prophetic perfect in the Hebrew text which describes a future event or action as having already been accomplished. Victory was assured by the promise of an omnipotent, faithful, and immutable God.

The Principles to Note (vss. 3f)

This battle plan is highly unusual to say the least. The ordinary methods and weapons of warfare like battering rams or scaling ladders or towers were not to be used at all. Rather, Joshua and his men were to employ God’s plan of victory as outlined in verses 3-7. Each day they were to march silently around the city with the priests carrying the trumpets of rams’ horns. The city covered only about 8.5 acres. On the seventh day they were to march seven times around the city and the priests were to blow their trumpets. Though this procedure would never be employed again with other cities, it would serve to teach Israel and God’s people of all ages that though we have human responsibilities in tearing down the strongholds raised up against the knowledge of God, victory is dependent on two things: God’s power and faith and faithfulness to His directions or plan.

The number seven figures prominently in this chapter. In fact it is used eleven times. Seven priests, with seven trumpets were to march around the city seven days with seven trips around the city on the seventh day.

Seven is a significant number in Scripture: (a) It signifies perfection or completion which reminds us that God's plan, no matter how foolish it may seem to us, is always perfect and cannot be improved upon by man (first cf. 1 Cor. 1:18f and then Rom. 12:2; 11:33-36). (b) Further, the number seven shows that the conquest was part of a spiritual exercise or process designed to set the people apart (sanctify them) for the Lord as a holy people who belong to a holy God. (c) Because of the significance of the number seven to creation and the Sabbath and the fact they were entering into their inheritance, it undoubtedly signified the beginning of a new order and the land as a picture of the believer's rest in the Lord (see Heb. 4).

We have in this a reminder of 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." We should note two things about Paul's emphasis in these verses:

(1) The Nature of the believer's weapons: As the walls of Jericho were brought down apart from human ability, so the spiritual weapons of our warfare are appropriated through prayer, faith, and various truths of the Word of God.

(2) The Design and Purpose of our weapons: Our weapons are designed to tear down strongholds. Strongholds are those things (human reasoning or ideas, values, and designs, etc.) raised up by a satanic world system and by fallen man that oppose the knowledge of God (biblical principles of grace, eternal values, etc.) and what knowing God intimately should mean in the lives of His people.

(3) The use of the blaring trumpets adds significant spiritual overtones. These trumpets could produce only a few notes. They were used mainly as an instrument of signal. They were used at the time of jubilee in connection with the religious feasts to proclaim the worship and presence of God and they were used in military contexts. Both concepts are applicable here. Here they signaled both God's presence and announced Jericho's impending doom. This was not just a military undertaking, the trumpets declared that the Lord of heaven and earth was present to tear down the walls of Jericho.

Application: We each have our Jericho or Ai that stands in the way of our ability to possess our possessions in Christ; virtual strongholds that impede our spiritual progress. It may be a weakness in our character, a physical infirmity, it may be indifference to spiritual things in general or to a specific area we are neglecting. It could be materialism or some life-dominating pattern. It may be a difficulty at one's place of work, in the home, with a particular personality, or it may be a financial burden. Regardless of the nature of our Jericho, we must realize victory always comes through God's plan of deliverance—never ours.

The Path or Sequence to Victory (6:8-21)

8 And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9 And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!" 11 So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13 And the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days.

15 Then it came about on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16 And it came about at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. 17 And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. 19 But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and it came about, when the people heard the

sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. (NASB)

These verses give us the sequence of events from the first day's march around the city to the last day and the collapse of the wall. The statement about the men being able to charge "straight ahead" calls our attention to the fact that they were able to charge in from all around the city. There were not just one or two breaches in the wall where soldiers were able to pour into the city. The whole wall around the city collapsed with the exception of the portion where Rahab's house was located.

Some interpreters claim that an earthquake caused the destruction. If so, it was a remarkable miracle of timing and localization since the camp at Gilgal (a little more than a mile away) and Rahab's house remained intact.³¹

The Prior Preparation

We should not forget that these instructions and the events of this chapter were preceded by a number of things God used to prepare the people to believe and obey Him. Israel had been prepared to trust the Lord by the events of the first chapters and their consecration to the Lord, especially in chapter 5. I am reminded of Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." Spiritual preparation is fundamental to our ability to appropriate God's strength in exchange for our weakness.

The Priority of Silence

Can you imagine the difficulty of this? Several hundred thousand people marching around the city without a word, not even a whisper! There were the priests with their trumpets, those with the ark, the armed men and then the rest of the people. This may have included the women and children as well. If this was the case, the silence may be even a bigger miracle than the walls falling down!

The passage does not tell us why they were to be silent, but perhaps it illustrates and teaches the principle of being silent before God and just resting in Him. Does any passage come to mind? What about Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent." Then there is Psalm 46:10-11 which reads: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us ..." As this Psalm suggests, the silence teaches us the need to get quiet, to stop our running around that we may rest quietly in Him as we think on Him in the midst of our trials and conquests in life. Our tendency is to gripe and complain to others or seek our comfort from people more than we talk to God and seek our comfort from Him.

The Principle of Obedience Through Faith

Regardless how unusual the plan was or how hard it was to carry out, there was explicit obedience. We read in Hebrews 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ..." In spite of the taunts that were perhaps hurled down at them from the walls as they marched silently around Jericho, they were willing to look foolish and simply rest in the Lord. He was their source of strength.

If we want to overcome our obstacles and testings, we must submit to God's way by faith:

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5).

22 And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord. He has also rejected you from *being king*" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

The Principle of Endurance

Joshua's command in verse 10, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, *until the day* I tell you, 'Shout!'" shows the people must have understood God's plan would involve more than one day. Yet, a careful reading of the text also suggest Joshua did not unfold the entire plan at the first, but day by day gave them instructions. Each day they would go out and march silently around the city and then return with nothing happening. The walls were still standing and Jericho had not surrendered. Yet, they did not murmur or complain or question Joshua's instructions. They simply obeyed day after day until the seventh day when they marched around the city seven times. At the command of Joshua on the seventh day they gave the great shout and the walls came tumbling down by the mighty hand of God. Is it not significant that Hebrews 11:30, which says, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days," is

followed in the next chapter, 12:1-2, with a charge to run the race set before us *with endurance* by looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith? This remind us that the Lord often works slowly. We want immediate deliverance, but the Lord often tests our faith and in the process builds our character and our relationship with Him so we find the Lord to be what we really need.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

Too often we want immediate solutions and all our needs and wants met so we do not have to wait on the Lord and trust Him. We want to trust in our health, our bank accounts, our position in the community, our reputation, in our talent, education, and abilities. We don't want to trust the Lord alone. For a good illustration of this compare Naaman's response when he was told he would have to wash seven times in the Jordan river (2 Kings 5:11-14). Cleansing only came to Naaman when he humbled himself and washed seven times, not four or five or even six, but seven. See also Psalm 62:1-8 and the emphasis there of the need for us to wait patiently to find rest, not in our quick solutions, but in God alone. Surely, the Lord was teaching Israel the need to wait patiently to find their rest in Him.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/5-destroying-fortresses-victory-jericho-joshua-61-27>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Consider the faith required to trust and obey God's directions for conquering the city of Jericho (Hebrews 11:30). When first hearing the plan, many Israelites may have thought, What kind of strategy is this? Who conquers a city with such a battle plan? The answer: God does, and his people do so by faith in him. God's bizarre (to human thinking) plan had an important spiritual lesson to teach the Israelites: Receiving the promised land could only be accomplished on God's terms. The people were not to compromise, ignore, or tweak the terms in any way. Even though the commands of God were unconventional, those commands were to be obeyed. Christians do well to remember that God's commands are still meant to be obeyed without equivocating. Though Christians may disagree about some particulars, we know from Jesus that our first command is to love the Lord (Mark 12:30), and loving him involves obedience (John 14:15). May we obey everything the Lord has revealed to us that we may receive his blessings!

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

God's Plan - After Moses died, Joshua continued to lead the Hebrews into the promised land. When they came to Jericho, it looked impossible to conquer. But God had promised the land to His people, and it's all about His plan, not about our capabilities.

God's Battle Plan - Joshua privately received a visit from a man with a sword. Joshua immediately inquired whose side this visitor was on. The visitor did not take a side but served the Lord alone. He was on God's side as commander of the Lord's army. Joshua bowed in utter submission because he recognized the divine visitation. The commander's instruction about the holy ground of their meeting confirmed this. The Lord then directed Joshua to march his army around Jericho for six days, with the ark and priests in the lead. On the seventh day, the army was to march around the city seven times, the priests blow the trumpets, the fighting men shout, and the wall would collapse. To the human mind, this military strategy made no sense, but when Joshua and the people obeyed God's orders, they claimed the city.

God in the Center - "What about me?" "When am I going to get mine?" These are common daily mantras. Selfishness is considered acceptable in our society—almost expected. However, God's children should carry a different air, focused on establishing and building up His kingdom here on earth. This seems like an impossible task. But Joshua and Jericho are a perfect example of the victory believers can experience when they are committed to carrying out God's intentions His way and keeping Him in the center of what we do.