

The Conquest of Jericho

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – The Israelites come against Jericho and destroy it, saving Rahab and her family
2. aim – To cause us to remember the promises of God to destroy the strongholds of sin in us
3. passage – Joshua 6:1-27

b. outline

1. The Instructions for the Conquest (Joshua 6:1-7, 10)
2. The Details of the Conquest (Joshua 6:8-9, 11-21)
3. The Grace in the Conquest (Joshua 6:22-27)

c. opening

1. the **structure** of this chapter
 - a. **(again)** a chapter that contains a single pericope
 - b. the ESV names it “The Fall of Jericho” – but, I prefer the title “**The Conquest of Jericho**”
 1. the city didn’t just “fall” to the Israelites; it was **conquered** by the power of God
 2. and, this is not the *first* military victory of the Israelites, but it is the beginning of the “Conquest”
2. the **importance** of this chapter
 - a. because it is a very familiar story (**i.e.** one often taught to children), it is easy to overlook or “dismiss” the importance of what is taking place here in the history of the Israelites
 - b. **and:** it is “downplayed” by liberal scholars – the city’s location and dating is disputed, and because the destruction of a people “offends” our modern sensibilities, the “assumption” is that this event (like many others!) is *historical fiction* written to be an *allegory* (**i.e. what walls do you face?**)
 1. **e.g.** the idea of a city simply “collapsing” at the shout of a people surrounding it is *odd*
 - a. Tell es-Sultan, dating to the MBA (c. 2000BC), is assumed to be the location of the original city, and there is *some* evidence of this event, but there are dating and structural issues
 2. however, the destruction of Jericho cannot be just an *allegory*
 - a. **IMO:** a **continuation** of the encounter with the Commander of the Lord’s army (**in 5:13ff**)
 3. the Commander “has come” (**5:13a**) and (through the spiritual forces he commands, along with the Israelite warriors) the city is (about to be) destroyed *for its wickedness*
 - c. **Jericho is an example of Yahweh bringing judgment upon the wicked (which they rightly deserve) while rescuing the redeemed (which they do not deserve)**
 1. **i.e. the event is an historical reality because judgment is an historical reality**
 2. the “*sin of the Amorites*” is complete (**Genesis 15:16**) – their wickedness has reached its zenith, and God’s patience (to allow them to repent) has come to an end (**Romans 9:22f**)

“What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory ...”

 - a. **i.e.** God’s *glory* is about to be revealed and upheld ...

I. The Instructions for the Conquest (Joshua 6:1-7, 10)

Content

a. the reaction of the city (v. 1)

1. the people of Jericho have decided to take a *completely defensive* posture
 - a. they apparently *understand* what is coming – they *assume* the Israelites are about to attack them
 - b. so, they put themselves on **lockdown** – sealed up to prevent anything from getting in
 - c. **i.e.** a typical posture of city-states in this time – shut up the city to prevent easy infiltration; make the enemy have to attack the defenses, which (hopefully!) weakens them in the process
2. but, their posture *strongly suggests something here:* they are without *hope* (“*melted*”; **i.e. 2:10f**)
 - a. their only “hope” is that they *might* be able to “wait out” the military force coming
 - b. even though ... they know what the Israelites did to the kings of Sihon and Og, and **they undoubtedly know about these same people crossing the Jordan on dry land**
 - c. **IOW:** they *hope* that their mud-brick walls will be able withstand the *power* of a God capable of stopping the flow of a flooded river

b. the instructions of the Lord (vv. 2-5)

1. **note:** don't be "confused" by the chapter break – the story of **5:13-15** continues in **6:1-5**
 - a. **i.e. 6:1** is a **parenthetical note** designed to *explain* the statement of the Lord in **v. 2:**
 1. Joshua is *still* standing with the Commander outside of Jericho – the Commander now points towards Jericho and says, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand"
 - b. **i.e.** the response of Jericho *demonstrates* that they are condemned (**even they know it!!**)
 1. they have not come out to fight; they have not come out in humility before the God of Israel; they have not even come out to seek a "treaty" – they have simply *covered* behind their walls
2. so, the Commander gives to Joshua a **general** set of instructions for what they are to do
 - a. march around the city *once each day* for six days; seven priests blowing rams' horns shall lead with the ark on each circuit; on the seventh day, *repeat* the above *seven times*; at the end of the seventh circuit (the 13th circumnavigation), the priests shall make a long trumpet blast, the people will shout, and the wall of the city will "*fall down flat*", and the people are to rush forward into it
3. **note:** the Commander does not give a "typical" set of *military* instructions
 - a. the force would not be just the "*men of war*," but the **entire people** (including women and children)
 - b. **why?** – because *Yahweh* will fight this battle as the Commander of the Lord's army – all the people will be there to **observe** the power of God – it will show *all of them* the fulfillment of God's promise
4. after giving these instructions, the *theophany* ends, and Joshua takes the reins

c. the instructions of Joshua (vv. 6-7, 10)

1. Joshua gives to the people an **initial** set of instructions for marching around the city
 - a. the priests and the ark are to go first, and the "*armed men*" were to "surround" them (**protection**)
 1. this does not break the **symbolism** of the ark: it is still *ahead of the people* – they still see (and hear!) the priests in front of them, implying that they are *following the Lord* around the city
 - b. but, Joshua *adds a command* (**v. 10**): the people are to remain **utterly silent** while marching
 1. they are not to let "*any word go out of [their] mouth*" until the long, final trumpet blast
 2. **note:** think about a million people circumnavigating a city *in utter silence*, the only sound being the sound of rams' horns from the priests at the front – **what would that be like?**
 - a. after the first day, they would have to endure the taunts of the city-folk from over the wall
 - b. they would have plenty of time to think about the future, each time becoming more *unsure*
 3. why the silence? – **answer:** because when the people shout at the end **it will be the voice of God himself through them** – his word (not theirs!) brings destruction *and they will know it*
2. the city is to be destroyed by the *judging word of Yahweh* – he will speak *his power* (**Psalm 46:10f**)
"*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, ...!*" *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*"

II. The Details of the Conquest (Joshua 6:8-9, 11-21)

Content

a. the first six days around the city (vv. 8-9, 11-14)

1. **vv. 8-9, 11 (day one):** the people circumnavigate the city once, returning to their camp
2. **vv. 12-14a (day two):** the people circumnavigate the city *again*, returning to their camp
3. **v. 14b (days three – six):** Joshua *shortens* the repetition with a summary ("*so they did for six days*")

b. the seventh day around the city (vv. 15-21)

1. **v. 15 (day seven):** the people circumnavigate the city *seven times* (**still being silent**)
 - a. **question:** why seven times on this day; wouldn't *once* around the city be enough?
 - b. **obvious:** seven times would clearly indicate *to Jericho* that God's power was about to fall
 - c. **theory:** seven times would "wind" the entire nation of a million people (or more!) around Jericho, such that *everyone at the same time* would be somewhere in the circle
2. Joshua gives (or had given!) instructions to the people for the end of the seventh circuit (**vv. 16-19**)
 - a. make a great shout and the city will be "opened" for its destruction, everyone to rush in
 1. the **content** of the shout is unknown, but a possibility may have been the **Shema** (**Deut. 6:4**)
"*Hear, O Israel: The LORD [is] our God, the LORD is one [alone].*"
 2. **e.g.** the shout of the people is likened to an **act of faith** in **Hebrews 11:30**
 - b. the city is "*devoted to destruction*" = everything in it, *including all living things*, is to be destroyed
 1. *nothing* is to be taken for personal use; everything of "value" is to be put into the treasury
3. the people shout, the city walls collapse (**i.e.** they fall *straight down*, they do *not* fall over; as though pushed down from "above"), and everything and *everybody* in the city is destroyed
4. **the judgment of God is unleashed in the shout of the people – his word through them destroys the "power" of the city and its iniquity is judged unto death** (**i.e.** one little word shall fell them)
 - a. **when the day of God's judgment finally arrives, no force of man shall stand before it**

III. The Grace in the Conquest (Joshua 6:22-27)

Content

a. the grace of God in the end of the city (vv. 24, 26-27)

1. the final result of the judgment of God upon the city was that it was a) burned until there was nothing left of it, b) a curse was placed over the location to prevent it from being reinhabited, and c) the fame of Joshua spread throughout Canaan
 - a. the curse was “before the Lord” = it is God’s word over the city that it should never be rebuilt
 1. **i.e.** it is to “stand” as an eternal monument for Israel to the judgment of God over wickedness
 - b. the curse was “of his firstborn” = anyone attempting to rebuild it will face harsh punishment
 1. **i.e.** Joshua puts the curse in a **poetic form**, with typical Hebrew **parallelism to make the point**
 2. **note:** the fulfillment of the curse comes in the days of Ahab when Hiel of Bethel attempted to rebuild it at the cost of two (2) of his sons (**1 Kings 16:34**)
 - c. the curse was “in all the land” = everyone now knew of the power of Joshua (**see future**)
2. **IOW:** it is an act of God’s grace to destroy this city, to prevent its evil from overcoming the Hebrews

b. the grace of God upon Rahab (vv. 22-23, 25)

1. **note:** the chapter is clearly a picture of the *judgment* of God, but this wrath of God is juxtaposed by the **grace of God** in keeping the promise to Rahab (**i.e.** she is mentioned in **vv. 17, 23, 25**)
 - a. Joshua sends the original spies (the two she had protected) into the city to rescue her (**v. 22**)
 1. they would know where she lived, and it was *their promise* now to be fulfilled
 2. they bring her *and her family* out and set them “outside the camp” (**i.e.** in a safe place)
 - b. **remember (from chap. 2):** Rahab trusts in the God of the Israelites *because God has revealed himself to her* – it is God who has drawn her to himself, and now *his promise* is fulfilled
 - c. **Jericho is an example of Yahweh bringing judgment upon the wicked (which they rightly deserve) while rescuing the redeemed (which they do not deserve)**
2. **question:** how do we pass through the judgment of God?
 - a. **IMO:** our nation is under judgment – God has turned us over and wickedness has risen up (**Romans 1**) – people have “hidden” themselves behind their “walls” trying to prevent death and judgment (which they know they deserve), but the judgment has come anyway!
 - b. **answer:** by shouting our “Shema”: **Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9 cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6)**
 1. like Rahab, we trust in the promise of God; like Israel we shout our profession of faith
 2. **we pass through temporal and eternal judgments by crying out this confession – God’s mercy (in Christ Jesus) comes to us iff we are willing to shout the name of the Lord**