

Commentary on Joshua 6:2-3, 4, 12-20
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, June 26, 2011**, is from **Joshua 6:2-3, 4, 12-20**. **Five Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary* below.

Joshua 6:2-4

(Joshua 6:2) The LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers.

After Joshua received the spies’ report, he heard directly from God that indeed God would hand the city, king, and soldiers over to Joshua and the Israelites. Just as God spoke to Moses, God spoke to Joshua. Just as God expected Moses to obey Him as the true Leader of the people, so God expected Joshua to obey Him.

(Joshua 6:3) You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days,

This battle plan may have seemed strange to Joshua and the Israelites, just as it may seem strange to us today. However, it did have the psychological advantage of playing on the hearts and minds of those whose hearts were already melting in fear of the

Israelites and their God. Each day, the Israelites would create more dread in the hearts of their enemies in Jericho. Each day the Israelites marched and were not attacked by their enemies, the more confidence they attained in God and their victory.

(Joshua 6:4) *with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets.* [Note: the portion of this verse in italics was omitted from the official *Uniform Lesson Series* for a reason unknown to me.]

In some sense, this requirement was a test of obedience on the part of the Israelites. Their parents had failed the test of the manna in the wilderness by saving some for the next day or failing to save some the day before the Sabbath when there would be no manna provided. Would the Israelites obey God explicitly as God commanded? Would they patiently and tirelessly without complaining march around the city seven times and then blow their trumpets as God required before they attacked, or would they try to attack in a conventional way in disobedience to God? They passed the test by doing exactly as God commanded through Joshua.

Joshua 6:12-20

(Joshua 6:12) Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the

LORD.

At the beginning of the day, Joshua rose early in the morning to obey God. Just as the ark preceded the Israelites into the River Jordan and the water was parted when the soles of the priests touched the water in obedience to God, so the Israelites could pass on dry ground as they had at the Red Sea under Moses' command; so, as the priests carried the ark, God would go with them and protect them and empower them to defeat their enemies in Jericho.

(Joshua 6:13) The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually.

God did not need to do this to defeat Jericho, but the Israelites needed to obey God to defeat Jericho (as they would later learn in other battles). Furthermore, the fighting of the Israelites in their first major battle in the Promised Land would be easier if the soldiers in the city were so totally terrified and demoralized they could not fight effectively. The display of the priests and the ark would show the Israelites and others in the Promised Land that the battle was the Lord's battle too, and God was fighting with and for them to conquer the land for them.

(Joshua 6:14) On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

The Israelites marched around the city one time each day for six days, just as commanded by God. We are not told if the seventh day they marched was the Sabbath or not. But it is clear that if they marched for seven days that they did not rest on the Sabbath, and this was in obedience to God's command. Jesus later taught that the Sabbath was made for man; therefore, He healed on the Sabbath. Perhaps the lesson that Israel and others needed to learn was that sometimes we must fight on the Sabbath. By fighting on the Sabbath, their enemies would learn that they should not attack the Israelites on the Sabbath and think they would not defend themselves. The total destruction of the city was commanded by God; therefore, it might have been conquered on the Sabbath, we do not know.

(Joshua 6:15) On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.

Jesus did good; and He did the will and the work of His Father on the Sabbath. Jesus said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. God told the Israelites to march seven times around the city. If this were a Sabbath day, no doubt that would have been a longer distance

than a Sabbath day's journey (various distances have been proposed, some say 2,000 cubits). There are times to rest and times to fight. The importance of obeying God's command must not be understated.

(Joshua 6:16) And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

What a loud and terrifying noise this must have produced! Joshua did not say, "Shout and the walls will fall down." He obeyed God and left the results of his obedience to God. The people were to shout, and God would give them the victory in His way. God gave them the victory by unexpectedly bringing down the walls of the city so the soldiers could easily enter the city and in the chaos kill their enemies. Imagine how people cope with massive earthquakes in a city today, and then add to that turmoil an invading army; they would be virtually helpless.

(Joshua 6:17) The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent.

Many have argued that the residents of the city were so diseased spiritually and physically that for the spiritual and physical protection of the Israelites everyone in the city had to be destroyed, except for

those who had faith (such as Rahab and her family), people God could easily heal. For example, by faith, Lot and his daughters were saved by the angels when God necessarily had to destroy Sodom. Rahab and her family were saved by their faith when they trusted in and obeyed God by staying in her home. In the case of Jericho, God did not destroy the city by fire and sulfur but by an invading army under His command.

(Joshua 6:18) As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it.

Joshua emphasized obedience, knowing that some might be tempted to loot and steal as they destroyed the city. Joshua warned that one person's disobedience could lead to God's punishment in the camp. All items of a certain type were to be destroyed, and one person's disobedience by stealing might lead to the destruction of others; for example, the item stolen might bring a disease into the camp, or lead some to think that obeying God really is not important, or lead God to quit supporting the people until they repent, or lead Joshua to discipline and punish those who disobeyed after their disobedience obviously hurt others.

(Joshua 6:19) But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the

LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”

Joshua named four of the most important and valuable metals of that time. Bronze and iron remind us of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, and of how important these metals were in agriculture, warfare, and human progress. These metals could not become diseased, as leather and cloth might become diseased and spread to other items or people. Gold and silver can be beautiful and valuable and used for trade (as with bronze and iron). God’s command would prevent soldiers from fighting among themselves for these valuable metals.

(Joshua 6:20) So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it.

When the people obeyed God, they experienced great success and God was honored and became more respected by the Israelites and their enemies in the Promised Land. They experienced success when they did exactly as God commanded and did not take half measures. They learned the secret of success for future battles.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Is obeying God as important today as it was in the days of Moses, Joshua and the Israelites? Why or why not?
2. What would you say to someone who thought that obeying God was not as important as it once was because since the coming of Jesus we now live under grace and we are saved by faith and not by obeying God?
3. Why do you think God ordered the destruction of everyone in the city of Jericho, except, of course, Rahab and those in her home?
4. Why do you think God ordered the soldiers to take nothing for themselves when they destroyed the city? What do you think might happen if some of them disobeyed and took something for themselves?
5. What teachings in these verses might trouble a nonbeliever; teachings they might use as reasons to support their unbelief? How might you discuss their ideas with them?

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