

Message #11**Joshua 6:6-21**

It has often been said that there are three levels of faith when it comes to God:

1. There is faith that rests in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. There is faith that reckons the promises of God to be true—believe God will do what He says.
3. There is faith that risks and dares to believe God and then does something big for God.

Hebrews 11:30 says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days.” **The events of Jericho were designed to teach Israel a lesson of faith.**

If they would believe God and did what God told them to do, they would experience tremendous victory. If they didn’t do what God told them to do, they would experience tremendous defeat. This is clearly the lesson of Joshua 6. This is an odd type of warfare, but this is God’s type of warfare.

Last time we looked at a description of Jericho (6:1). It was a tightly shut fortress. No one was coming in or out. There was no chance of surprising the city and take it when a door was left open because no doors were open.

We also learned about what God wanted Israel to do (6:2-5). In one of the strangest military strategies in the history of warfare, God asked the people of Israel to quietly and publicly march around the city once a day for six days and then seven times a day on the seventh day.

What we learn from this text is important:

WHEN GOD’S LEADERS AND GOD’S PEOPLE BELIEVE GOD’S WORD AND OBEY IT, GOD WILL LEAD THEM TO EXPERIENCE WONDERFUL VICTORY.

When we find we are facing an intimidating obstacle or enemy and we make a decision to believe what God’s Word says, and then we purpose to by faith obey it, we will discover that God will lead us to great victory.

Joshua is right in the heart of the action here. Joshua carefully lays out God’s Word and instruction and the leaders and the people follow it right to victory. These instructions from God were implicit. As Dr. H. A. Ironside said, there was no room for human schemes or approved military tactics. Everything here was ordered by God and all Joshua and the leaders and the people needed to do was to follow God’s Word (*Joshua*, p. 68).

We have all had Jericho obstacles in our way. Our job is not to come up with some humanly designed scheme to victory; our job is to carefully obey the Word of God and when we do that, God will give victory.

There are eight historical facts we want to see from this text:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Joshua tells the leadership and the people what to do. **6:6-7**

In **verse 6**, Joshua tells the priests that they were to take the “Ark of the Covenant” and seven priests were to take seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Ark of the Covenant. **So the weapons of warfare are seven trumpets and the Word of God.** Probably some of the priests wondered about this, but they had just seen God part the Jordan, so they were in no position to doubt what he is telling them to do. **It is clear from this text that God wants us to realize that when we are in war, He wants us focused on His Word. Victory comes through a careful focus on the Word of God.**

According to **verse 7**, Joshua told the warriors that they were to go forward and march around the city, with the armed men going on “before the ark of the LORD.” **This is critical, because the emphasis for this victory is not on fighting the enemy; it is protecting God’s Word.**

These warriors were to go before the ark, which illustrates how sacred God’s Word actually is.

Victorious churches, who will see God do victorious things, carefully protect the Word of God. Many places today don’t even care if they are accurately taught the Word of God. Their only concern is numbers and they will do whatever they can to increase numbers. Real victory comes by careful protection of God’s Word.

I love something Arthur Pink wrote: “It pleases God, as a general rule, to select for His instruments those who have no glittering accomplishments: rather, plain, simple, homely men. It is not silver-tongued orators through whom He most shows forth His praises, but by those who have nothing more, naturally, to commend them unto their hearers than that which resembles the “ram’s horns.” His most eminent servants have not been those of royal blood, noble birth, or high station, but taken from the lower walks of life. Luther, the principal agent used by God in the mighty Reformation, was the son of a miner. Bunyan was but a tinker, yet his book Pilgrim’s Progress has been translated into more languages, had a much wider circulation, and been used in blessing to a far greater number of souls, than all the writings put together of the learned Owen and Goodwin! Spurgeon had neither university nor college training, nor was he a graduate of any seminary! Though after God’s call to the ministry, each of them studied hard and long to improve himself! In proportion as the churches have made an idol of education and theological learning of their ministers, has their spirituality waned.”

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – The people obey exactly what Joshua told them to do. **6:8-9**

Notice how **verse 8** begins “and it was so.” Just as soon as Joshua communicated God’s Word they obeyed it. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went before the ark and blew the trumpets and the armed men went before the Word of God and the rear guard protected the Word of God as they began to move (**v. 9**).

To truly move forward for God, we need to have a reverence and respect and a commitment to the Word of God. This nation was heading into battle, and look at the emphasis on carefully protecting God’s Word.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Joshua tells the leadership and people to keep silent. **6:10**

Joshua commanded that those marching keep silent. They were not to shout nor speak until Joshua would tell them to speak. We calculate that the trip around the city took approximately 20 minutes. So there was to be total silence for the entire time. One commentator said this proves there were no women in this march, but frankly we have known some men who can out talk any woman.

It is interesting to me that we don't see in the text where God told them they could not talk. So we must assume that God revealed this to Joshua. But when Joshua told them this, some could have taken the position that Joshua is a dictator. Some could have said, "Who is he to tell us we cannot talk?" These men did not question Joshua, rather they faithfully obeyed Joshua and they were about to experience one of the most amazing victories of their entire lives.

There is something to be said for being quiet. When people come to church and quietly take in the Word of God, they will see God do some wonderful things.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Joshua leads the march around Jericho the first day. **6:11**

Joshua had them take the ark of the LORD around the city once and after the first march, they went to the camp and spent the night at their camp. So the 600,000 plus men leave camp, circle the city and go back to camp. Again observe that the focus is not on the army, it is on the ark. The focus was on the Word of God.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Joshua leads the march around Jericho six straight days. **6:12-14**

As we have calculated, this procession would not take up the whole day. If they circled the city in rows of 100, it would take about 1 ½ hours. What we learn from **verse 12** is that Joshua got up early and they made their march early in the morning. This was the procedure for six straight days.

Joshua would get up early and the priests would take the ark, the seven priests would blow the trumpets and the armed men and rear guard would fall into place and the march would begin. They would circle Jericho and go back to camp.

Now the people inside Jericho must have been perplexed by all of this. We do not know what was going on in the mind of the Canaanites of Jericho, but this type of military tactic was not something they had ever seen. This was some form of absurd warfare. The Israelis were marching around the city almost oblivious to anything except their focus on God's Word. They circle the city and don't say a word. They don't threaten; they don't do anything except march around the city quietly.

You take a church that just quietly trusts God and stays focused on the written Word and there will come great victory. It probably won't appear as though the church is in touch with reality. But the truth is God will lead it and bless it.

Many theological institutions are no longer in existence because they lost this focus. They decided they needed more than just a focus on God's Word for great academic victory so they changed course and down they went. When they were seeing God's Word, it was almost as if they were oblivious to the academic realities of the world so they decided to go that way and they were destroyed.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – Joshua leads the march around Jericho the seventh day. **6:15**

In precise conformity to God's Word, Joshua led the children of Israel to march around the city seven times. According to **verse 15**, they began at the “dawning of the day.” Some Hebrew scholars said the way to translate this is that they were “up at the crack of dawn.”

If the entire entourage took 1 ½ hours to circle the city, then we are looking at about 10 ½ total hours on that seventh day. If the march starts at 6 AM, it will last until about 4:30 PM.

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – Joshua tells the people exactly what to do after the seventh circling of the city. **6:16-19**

As they completed the seventh time around the city, the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua gives three commands:

Command #1 - Joshua commanded them to shout. **6:16b**

The reason for the shout was God had given them the city. This was not a silent or secret attack, they were to shout and this “shout” was because God had given them this city.

Command #2 - Joshua commanded the city was under ban. **6:16-19**

What this meant was all of the silver and gold and bronze were to go to the treasury of God. Everything in Jericho belonged to God and the warriors were not to take one thing for themselves.

The city was not about Israel getting money. Jericho was about Israel getting her Promised Land. So taking the spoils was completely off limits. This also meant that all of the people in the city were to be destroyed, including their cattle.

God promised Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, not gold and silver. He wanted His people to enjoy their land and He would provide for them. **Someone has wisely said you will never enjoy what you don't have if you don't enjoy what you do have.**

God did not need any Canaanite gold, silver or bronze to provide for His people. This is Him taking His people into His land and He did not want to start this off with a dependency on Canaanite stuff.

Command #3 - Joshua commanded them to spare Rahab. **6:17**

It is clearly brought out that the profession of Rahab was that of being a harlot and she was to be spared. Because of what she had done for the spies, God would honor her and all who were in her house.

HISTORICAL FACT #8 – The people obey exactly what Joshua told them to do. **6:20-21**

As soon as Joshua was done telling them what to do, they did it. They shouted, the priests blew the trumpets and they shouted with a great shout and the wall “fell down flat.” Those words “wall fell down flat” means that the wall fell flat down right in its place.

One of the more amazing scientific discoveries about this was made in the 1930’s by John Garstang. John Garstang led an expedition at Jericho from the years 1930-36. Now typically when a city is destroyed, the walls of the city are bashed in and form various piles of rubble and mounds of debris. John Garstang discovered that instead of the walls of Jericho caving in, they had fallen down flat out away from the city. Garstang wrote this: “As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to camber up and over the ruins into the city” (John Garstang, *Joshua/Judges*, p. 146).

The walls fell down flat and therefore every man could just walk straight into the city (**v. 21**).

According to **verse 22**, the Israelites went straight up into the city and destroyed everything—men, women, children, and the animals. God’s wrath had finally come and when God’s wrath comes, no one escapes.

By the way, children are often taught a chorus that isn’t quite right. “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho.” That is not true. God did it. Joshua did not fit anything. He simply communicated what God’s Word wanted done and when the people obeyed God’s Word, God gave them victory.

This is a big problem believers have. They think they fit the battle and win. We cannot win; God is the victor. What we need to do is exactly what Israel did; we need to carefully protect and obey the Word of God because when we do that, we get victory because God gives the victory.