

January 26, 2020 - David Baumgartner

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Battle has come.

If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Joshua chapter 6. It's 27 verses, but we won't be looking at every one of them. You have to realize Jericho was one of the oldest fortified cities in the ancient Near East.

It had high walls, as you know, and it had strong gates. What a symbol of military strength. And since the city was built on an oasis, it had a natural spring water, Jericho could withstand a siege indefinitely.

And our passage opens here this morning with Jericho's gates are now shut. And that's because they're waiting for Israel to attack any moment now.

And even though we read back in chapter 5, verse 1, where it says that their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel, there's no plans for surrender.

[1:18] No, they're planning to go ahead with this. And so, and the same thing with Joshua. And we would ask this question. Big battle coming.

What kind of strategy will Joshua deploy? Well, let's go ahead and read. I'm going to only read the first five verses. Oh, thank you.

The first five verses of Joshua chapter 6. Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel.

No one went out. No one came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into your hand with its king and its valiant warriors.

And you shall march around the city, all the men of war, circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also, seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark.

[2:23] And then on the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times. And the priests shall blow the trumpets. 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.

Heavenly Father, it's with much anticipation that we see how you conquered these people, Lord.

And we see how you used Israel to do that. And Lord, what did it take? What did they need to do to see this through? Lord, we thank you because we fight our battles as well.

We need you to fight for us, Lord. So we pray that through the ministry of your word and through your spirit, Lord, that we would understand these things and that we can apply them to us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Remember, verse 2, it says, The Lord said to Joshua, See, I've given you, I've given Jericho into your hand, and with its king and its valiant warriors.

[3:42] I'm just struck here by what a sure thing this is for Joshua. The Lord says, Is that kind of a hint of sarcasm?

Calling them valiant warriors? In verses 3 and 5, we see the Lord's instructions to Joshua. He says, You shall march around the city, all the men of war, circling at once.

You shall do this for six days. Also the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark. And then on the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times.

And the priests blowing their trumpets. I just want to notice a few things here. There is no military strategy. No. No battering rams. No special weapons.

No, instead, this battle is going to feature a procession of priests, some who are carrying the Ark of the Covenant, and others blowing their trumpets. And so this battle is going to be very unusual.

[4:41] It's going to have a supernatural character. The second thing to notice is verse 4. It specifies ram's horns. Now we have to remember the Jewish nation had two kinds of trumpets or horns.

One, they had silver trumpets. And these were, these gave a bright, crisp sound. And these trumpets were used by the priests to signal when something important was happening.

Like, for instance, to summon a crowd for an attack. We actually see this in Numbers 10. You can look at that later. But Moses says, make these silver trumpets.

When you go to war, use them. But notice here in our text, the Lord specified ram's horns. That's the shofar. And they had a bass, dull sound to them.

And these were used for religious purposes. And that's because God is proclaiming his presence among the people. He's saying, here I am. That's through the shofar.

[5:48] Third thing to notice in this account, the prominence of the number 7. Did you notice that? Yes, priests, seven trumpets. They're marching seven days around the city.

And then on the seventh day, they do this special thing. In our end times revelation study, we saw that word seven come up so many times.

That's the word shiva in Hebrew. And it means to be full. It means completeness or perfection. So we see that number. And the Lord said on the seventh day, in verse 5, notice, when the priests make that long blast of the ram's horn.

And when you hear the sound of the trumpet, you shall all shout, he says. Shout greatly and the wall of the city will fall flat. And the people will go up straight ahead.

There you have it. That's the instructions from the Lord. So verse 6, Joshua puts the plan in motion. Verse 6, Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests and said to him, Take up the ark of the covenant.

[6:54] Let the seven priests carry seven trumpets of ram horns before the ark of the Lord. Further, he gives some details. If you want to follow in your Bible, if you have this, the first detail, notice in verse 10.

Joshua commanded the people, you shall not shout, nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth until the day I basically tell you.

Then you shall shout. In other words, Israel was supposed to be completely silent during this whole time while they marched around the city. Why is that?

Well, I think of a couple things here. If this is truly a religious event, as I believe it is, then there's a certain solemnity to it. Think about it.

Through the dull sound of the shofar, God is making his presence known to the people. And a second thing is that there's really no pleasure to be had in this.

[7:59] There isn't. When judgment is taking place, death is certain. And there's people who are going to die. And you and I should remember that.

When the Red Sea was in front of the people of Israel and Pharaoh's chariots were close behind them. Look at what Moses said in Exodus 14.

Moses said to the people, Do not fear. Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians, whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. Even the prophet Zechariah says, So number one, there's this silence here.

The second thing to notice here in verse 11, that the Ark of the Covenant was to be taken around the city once. And then they would come back to their camp and spend the night.

[9:12] That's what they did for those first six days. Circle the city of Jerusalem. Go back to your camp. And set up camp. Each day after that circle, they would do that for six days.

And we're not told how long it took to circle the city with this caravan. I don't know. One, two hours. I'm also assuming that the Israelites marched far enough away from the city walls to avoid any arrows or anything else like that.

Notice here in verse 15, it says, That's 13 times, if my math is right.

Is it? Yeah. 13 times. I wonder what effect that had on the Canaanites. I can imagine that the first few days of this, it was probably very unnerving.

It would have been haunting. You've got to remember, the Canaanites are expecting an invasion. They're expecting a fight. They're probably sharpening their swords and stuff.

[10:33] And yet they see this. We read that the doors of the city were bolted. But instead, you look over the wall and you see this caravan of people showing up each morning, marching around the city.

And all you can hear are the sounds of these feet. And you can hear the sound of the shofar.

They're just there.

They're just there. Kind of eerie, huh?

Isn't that eerie? Imagine seeing that and hearing that from a distance. Rather intimidating. But I think it's also possible that after a few days of this, that the Canaanites' fear turned to mockery.

[12:00] I do. After a few days, they would say something like this, Hey, these Israelites, they're harmless. In fact, it's kind of enchanting to watch them.

Come and join us. We'll have a barbecue. We'll set up our chairs and we'll watch the parade. We'll have a good time. You know why? We don't have to be afraid of them.

They're a bunch of weirdos. Why do I say that? I say it because in many ways, isn't that how the world sees the church today?

Harmless, having nothing important to say. They're just a bunch of weirdos. There was a time in history when preaching the word was at least respected.

It was. It was called open air preaching. Or you would stand on a tree stump and you would start preaching the word and people would actually listen and gather around.

[13:10] Try that today. What do you think it happened, Dave? Yeah. Today, generally speaking, many churches are either ignored or they're resisted.

So God's word is, and that's because God's word is ignored. How much is a church, any particular church ignored?

I believe that it's based on how much of God's word is present at that church. The greater the presence of the word, the greater she's ignored or maybe even resisted, if any church should dare to stir up trouble.

Look at what Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians. For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness. But to us who are saved, it is the power of God.

Well, the Israelites didn't think God's commands were foolish. Joshua gave some additional commands. Verse 17, he says, remember to rescue Rahab and her family.

[14:19] And then secondly, he has this command about the spoils of the battle. Now, originally, or I should say ordinarily, soldiers would have a share in the spoils of the war.

But not this time. Verse 17, look at what he says. The city shall be under the ban. It and all that belongs in it belongs to the Lord.

Only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in her house shall live. Because she hid the messengers whom we sent. What's all this about? It's about this.

This is their first victory in Canaan. And it was to be dedicated to the Lord. He would get the first fruits of this victory. And so Joshua gives them a warning.

Verse 18, as for you, keep yourselves from those things under the ban, lest you covet them, some of these things under the ban, so that you can make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble upon it.

[15:21] You might want to remember this because it might come up again. So, the time of the Canaanites ran out. Day 7, later on, verse 20.

The Israelites shouted and the priests blew the trumpets. And it came about that when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that they shouted a great shout and the wall fell down flat.

And the people went up to the city. Every man straight ahead and they took the city. 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.

And Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, go into the harlot's house and bring her out and all that are with her. And then in verse 24, they burned the city with fire and all that was in it.

Only the silver and gold and articles of bronze and irons were put in the treasury. Next, after the city was burned, verse 26, Joshua took an oath saying, Cursed is the man who tries to build on this foundation again, to build on Jericho.

[16:29] This is a warning to anyone who might be tempted to rebuild on this plot of land. There you have it, friends. The first battle for the Israelites. And now we can sing that Joshua fought the battle of Jericho.

We can do that. I want to ask this question again. What to what does Joshua owe his success? Well, God tells us, he made it perfectly clear, it's all about him. Not about Joshua. Not about the strength of Israel. Not about their military might.

Joshua didn't take the city by clever military tactics. He took it because the Lord fought for him. It's a supernatural fight. So what do we learn from this? You and I have, we may not be capturing cities like Joshua, but we do face enemies, don't we?

[17:30] We do. We face high walls. We face challenges. There's three things I'd like for us to see here and notice. The first thing is this, the faith of God's people.

Have you ever heard this, that the walls of Jericho fell down because of acoustic energy? Have you heard that? Oh man, I've heard that a long time ago.

It was all the noise, the trumpets and the beating of the feet. It made the walls of Jericho collapse. I'll say no to that. I will.

Look what the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 11. That it was by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled seven days. The Lord did it.

We as believers, we have faith too. We do. Our faith is in our Joshua, Jesus Christ, who's already defeated every spiritual enemy.

[18:33] Thanks be to God, Paul says, who gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. God said to Joshua in verse 2, I've given Jericho into your hand.

I've given its valiant warriors into your hand. Boy, what confidence Joshua must have felt. Do we have that same level of confidence as we fight?

It's a good question. We fight from victory, not just for victory. And just think about that first song that we sang, the battle belongs to the Lord.

Paul would say this in his second letter to the Corinthians. He says, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For our 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.

[19:41] And we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever your obedience is complete. So that leads us to the next one. We see their faith.

We see the obedience of God's people. God's plan here for the conquest of Jericho. Doesn't it seem kind of foolish? Would people say that today?

Do you think they teach this at Annapolis on how to do that? Maybe Joshua thought it was foolish at first. All these details about the horns, the marching in silence, the seven-day plan here.

All of this, I believe it was testing Israel's willingness and obedience to follow the Lord. But God's plans were carried out, even though they were unconventional, even though they were unusual. And I think in many ways that applies to us too, doesn't it? How many people have ever said to you, churches are weird? Yeah, it happens. This does apply.

[20:49] We are to follow God's commands, not the world's ways. Because the Lord declares in Scripture, we are different. Amen. Look what Paul says again in his first letter to the Corinthians.

He says, consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. He's chosen the base things of the world and things that are despised. God has chosen the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are, so that no man should boast before God.

You think about disobedience here. I want to ask this question. Are churches growing today here in North America? Are they?

Interesting question. Here's another question. Do the church, does the world respect the church today? No. You know, what do you do about that?

[22:01] What do we do? Well, here's an option. We can become like the world. Yeah. We can, and one way to do that, probably the best way, you get rid of this.

Get rid of the word of God. And you'll become popular. And you'll become popular. Maybe. You think that'll work? Probably not. I think it's possible.

In fact, probable. Churches can become so much like the world that the world takes very little notice of who we are or what we do.

That's especially if we think about this. We imitate the world's methods. If we cater to the world's appetites. If we solicit the world's approval.

Or if we measure what we do according to the world's standards. I want to ask that question. If we do all that, what do we have to offer people?

[23:03] And maybe even a better question. How can the Lord use such a church? A church that is compromised. A church that will not obey the Lord.

A church that does not honor His word. It's God's word. He has spoken. And He has given us truth. So we see the faith of the people.

The obedience of the people. We also see the worship of the people. These first fruits here. They belong to the Lord. And they were to give the Lord the first fruits.

Not the leftovers. And it's not because the Lord needs these things. No, it's so that He might be honored by them. As the Lord of hosts.

There's a principle I see here. Everything belongs to the Lord, right? And we should honor the Lord. He is worthy of our worship. If I could ask the musicians to come back up.

[24:06] This account, it also testifies to God's judgment against sin. We also see it testifies to the salvation that's offered.

Freely given to Rahab. As one who would acknowledge Him. Rahab's deliverance. It gives evidence to God's mercy. In contrast to all of the other people that are dwelling behind that wall. Wall of Jericho. Just like Jericho, though. Our present world is under judgment. But here's the good news, friends.

The simple gospel. The gospel that the word declares. In John 3.16, God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son.

That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world. But that the world should be saved through Him.

[25:12] He who believes in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already. Because He has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son.

And there will be a day when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. And there will be the sound of the trumpet. And Satan's kingdom will be ruined.

His walls will crumble. So until then, we travel around. Maybe we're mocked. Maybe we're ignored. Maybe we are a spectacle to people.

But we're proclaiming the simple gospel. That's what the Lord has called us to do. Amen. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for that You have won the victory.

You did it back then. You did it now. You do it for us today. Thank You, Lord, for all of the promises that we find in Jesus Christ. Thank You for just the truth that You are with us and that You will fight our battles.

[26:22] Lord, we pray that we would be obedient to You. We pray that we would listen to You and not run ahead of You nor lag behind. We pray that we'd be useful to You for Your kingdom.

Work those things in us, Lord. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.