

## Sermon Outline

### **“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

#### DIVINE TACTICS, HEAVENLY WARFARE (JOSHUA 6:1-7)

### **I. Jericho Locked Down (Joshua 6:1)**

- A. The king of Jericho had ordered the city to be locked-down.  
—“None went out, and none came in.”
- B. Why such harsh measures? It’s “because of the people of Israel.”
- C. By this time, all inhabitants of Jericho had heard the news (Josh 2:8-10).
  - 1. The little-known nation of Israel was about to launch an invasion.
  - 2. Israel was led by an immensely powerful deity named YHWH.
  - 3. And YHWH had given the entire land of Canaan to his people.
  - 4. Just how powerful was YHWH?
    - a. He parted the Red Sea for his people (Josh 2:10).
    - b. He led Israel out of Egypt.
    - c. He helped Israel overcome the two kings of the Amorite nation—Sihon and Og.
- D. Given this state of affairs, the most intelligent thing for a king to do is to ready the city for conflict.
- E. Of course, we have our questions.
  - 1. Why doesn’t Jericho send an army to attack the Israelites?
  - 2. Was Jericho waiting for assistance from its allies?
- F. According to Rahab’s testimony (Josh 2), great fear had fallen on all the inhabitants of the land.  
—The whole city was so utterly demoralized at this point that the only thing they could do was to lock themselves in.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What was the state of Jericho when Joshua 6 opens? (2) What is the reason for this? (3) According to Rahab’s words in Joshua 2:8-10, how much did Jericho know about the capabilities of Israel and her God, YHWH?

### **II. YHWH Speaks to Joshua (Joshua 6:2)**

- A. Meanwhile, back at the Israelite camp, the Lord speaks to Joshua once again: “And the LORD said to Joshua.”
- B. The Lord’s words are words of reassurance and encouragement: “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.”
  - 1. There are two important truths embedded in this statement.
    - a. God has guaranteed Israel’s success in the Jericho campaign.
    - b. God is the rightful Lord over the nations.  
—He gives nations and lands to whomever he wishes.
  - 2. God’s language emphasizes his supreme power.
    - a. In many ancient societies, the king was the supreme unifying symbol of the nation.
    - b. The “mighty men of valor” were the guardians and heroes of the realm.
    - c. Now, YHWH says he has given all these people into Israel’s hands.  
—YHWH is greater than all human powers and armies.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What words does the Lord now have for Joshua? (2) What two important truths are embedded in this statement? (3) How does the use of “king and mighty men of valor” highlight God’s power?

### III. Divine Tactics for the Conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6:3-5)

- A. The Lord unveils his marching orders for the conquest of Jericho.  
—There are two phases to them.
- B. The first phase involves the following:
  - 1. Israelite soldiers are to march around the city for six days (v 3).
  - 2. The soldiers will be accompanied by priests and the Ark of the Covenant (v 4).
- C. The second phase involves the following:
  - 1. The priests and soldiers will “march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.”
  - 2. After the seventh rotation, “...they make a long blast with the ram’s horn...then all the people shall shout with a great shout, *and the wall of the city will fall down flat...*” (v 5).
- D. Why such a strange tactics?
  - 1. There is virtually no practical advantage to have your soldiers march around the city like that.
    - a. It makes them sitting ducks.
    - b. And then to do this for seven days?
    - c. And seven times on the seventh day itself?
  - 2. From all external appearances, the Lord’s tactics do not seem to be wise.
  - 3. But the Lord does not see the need at this point to explain everything to us.  
—God is calling his people to trust and to obey his Word—even when it does not seem to make practical, military sense!
- E. But it could be that God has not left his instructions without any explanation.
  - 1. The clue as to why God calls Israel to march seven days round the city is in the schedule of events itself, especially, the frequent appearance of the number *seven*.
  - 2. In Joshua 3:1-5, there was also a seven-day scheme.
    - a. From Joshua’s instruction to the people to prepare to move out from Shittim (1:10) to the actual river crossing itself (3:7) were seven days.
    - b. The seven-day Sabbatical timetable leading to the crossing of the Jordan was intended to help Israel see their entrance into the Promised Land as a symbol of entering the Sabbath.
    - c. *Seven* is the number of completion, perfection, and Sabbath.
    - d. In Hebrews 4:8-10, the rest that Joshua gives to his people is treated as a symbol or foretaste of the eternal Sabbath age to come.
- F. Based on gleanings from Genesis 1, Joshua 3, and Hebrews 4, we ask: What was God saying to his ancient people when he used this seven-day schedule to order their movement?
  - 1. God may be reinforcing the same lesson he taught Israel when they crossed the Jordan.
  - 2. Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land, and now, their possession of Jericho, are symbols of the same event that is coming—the arrival of the Kingdom of God and the eternal Sabbath rest.
- G. If it is God’s intention to instruct his people in this truth, then it changes our whole understanding of Israel’s operation.
  - 1. As far as God is concerned, marching around Jericho is more than a military operation.  
—It is also a religious ritual.

2. Through the combination of military operation and religious ritual, God is helping Israel see that this war with Jericho is part of the larger war between the Kingdom of God and the regime of the Dragon.
- H. But what about the seven rotations around the city on the seventh day?
1. Seven rounds around the city on the Sabbath Day seem to suggest an *intensification* of the Sabbath.
  2. Seven rounds implies eternal perfection and unending rest.
  3. Seven rotations on the seventh day itself is a symbol of the Kingdom of God coming in power and glory (see Zech 14:5).
- I. As we reflect on the instructions that the Lord has given to Joshua, it is highly possible that God has explained the order of events to us—The explanation is in the order of events itself!
- J. There is something for us here as well.
1. Just as Israel’s war with Jericho is part of God’s war against the kingdom of darkness, so also are our own struggles against sin.
  2. When you and I fight against our sinful desires, we are part of this larger battle between God and the kingdom of darkness.
  3. Personal holiness is a weapon in the hands of God.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the two parts to the Lord’s marching orders? What is involved in each of the phases? (2) What could be the reason God calls Israel to march around Jericho for seven days—and then seven times on the seventh day? What theological truth could this sequence of events be communicating to us?

#### IV. Joshua Gives the Lord’s Words to the People (Joshua 6:6-7)

- A. In verses 6-7, Joshua faithfully repeats God’s instructions to his people.
- B. The first group he addresses are the priests: “So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests...”
1. Some priests are to “Take up the ark of the covenant.”
  2. Seven priests will “bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD.”
  3. The priests function as heralds and personal attendants of the great King, the Lord YHWH.
- C. The second group he addresses are the people, especially the soldiers.
1. The people are to “March around the city...”
  2. The soldiers are to “pass on before the ark of the LORD” (v 7).
  3. The soldiers are the advancing army of YHWH.
- D. God wants the entire procession—everything from the number of rotations around the city to the actual placement of the soldiers and the priests—to communicate an important truth.  
—*God has come with his holy ones to destroy the kingdom of darkness and restore his Kingdom on earth.*

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are God’s instructions for the priests? (2) What are God’s instructions for the soldiers? (3) What does God want to communicate through the whole procession?

#### V. Divine Tactics for the Spiritual Battle Today

**Just as God asked his people to wage heavenly warfare according to his instructions, and to trust him for victory, so he asks the same of us today. Our victory has been secured by**

**Jesus Christ. And God's tactics for holy warfare today involves making disciples and living the Christian life.**

- A. Is there anything comparable for God's people today? Has God given his people a body of instructions for how to take over a city?
1. Some use Joshua 6:1-7 as a general plan to retake cities for God.  
—They advocate “prayer walking.”
  2. But is that how God wants his instructions in Joshua 6:1-7 to be used today?
    - a. The problem with using Joshua 6:1-7 as a standard Christian battle plan is that even Joshua's Israelites did not do that!
    - b. The only time Joshua's Israel marched seven times around a city was here at Jericho!
    - c. God did not ask Israel to repeat this act for any of the other enemy cities.
    - d. The orders in Joshua 6:1-7 were for the Jericho campaign *alone*.
  3. So, no, Joshua 6:1-7 is not a standard plan for “claiming the city for God.”  
—In fact, there is no standard plan other than preaching the Gospel and doing good deeds.
- B. A key lesson our heavenly Father is teaching us through Joshua 6:1-7 is this:  
—We are to trust God for our victory and engage in spiritual warfare according to God's instructions.
- C. Jericho is a symbol of the enemies of God and his people.
- D. Here's the bad news.
1. Today, Jericho/the World is anything but locked down. It is alive, well, and strong!
  2. We Christians are sometimes tempted to wonder if we are even on the right side of history.
- E. But it is during times like these that we need to go to the Word of God.
1. Consider the following:
    - a. John 16:33: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
    - b. Ephesians 2:4-6: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus [.]”
  2. Even though the world seems so powerful, there is another side to the story that we don't often hear.  
—*In Jesus Christ, we have already overcome our enemies.*
  3. And Christ's victory will cover the earth.  
—Revelation 11:15: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”
- F. So, God wants us to hold on to his Word, no matter what the world looks like currently.
1. In the eyes of the world, God's Word will always look foolish.
  2. But “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18).
  3. For those whom God has chosen, Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23-24).
- G. What are God's divine tactics for waging war against the world?
1. We battle the world by making disciples for Christ (Mt 28:19).
  2. We battle the world by actively living as Christ-dependent Christians (Eph 4:22-24; 6:10-17).

3. When we teach and live the Word of God, we become weapons in God's hands against the darkness.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Has God given his people a body of instructions for how to take over a city? Why is it problematic to treat Joshua 6:1-7 as a standard operating procedure for spiritual warfare? (2) How *does* Joshua 6:1-7 apply to us? (3) What are God's tactics for waging war against the world today?