

Sermon Outline

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

WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN (JOSHUA 6:15-21)

I. The Mission of the Lord

- A. God is establishing his Kingdom of love, righteousness, and peace in the world.
- B. Because God’s love, righteousness, and peace reflect God’s own perfect character, anything that takes away from these holy attributes of God must be expelled from creation.
- C. God’s judgment is God’s holy and purifying love at work.
- D. The Church of Israel is beginning to know the honor of being an ally of God.
 - 1. Now that Israel has been cleansed from sin, Israel is ready to take her place as God’s Nation on earth.
 - 2. Israel has heard the call to be God’s new humanity.
 - 3. As Israel bows low to the Word of God, God raises her up above the nations.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is God’s mission in the world? (2) What is the nature of God’s love? (3) How does God’s judgment relate to God’s love?

II. The Seventh Day Arrives (Joshua 6:15)

- A. After six days of faithful obedience to the Lord, the seventh day finally arrives:
- B. On the seventh day, Israel marches “around the city in the same manner seven times.”
- C. Scripture makes clear that “It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.”
- D. Once again, what is the likely significance of the seven rounds around the city?
 - 1. Seven is the number of perfection and completion.
 - 2. God made the world on six days, and rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2).

3. The weekly seventh day Sabbath is the symbol of the new age that would come when God's Kingdom arrives.
4. Marching around the city seven times on the seventh day suggests an *intensification* of perfection.
 - a. Israel's seven rounds points to the arrival of the Kingdom of God in all of its fullness and intensity.
 - b. God's Kingdom will bring life to those who eagerly wait for it—but judgment on those who worship the powers of evil.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Israel do on the seventh day? (2) What is the significance of the seven rounds around the city on the seventh day?

III. “And at the Seventh Time...” (Joshua 6:16-19)

- A. When the seventh time arrives...
 1. The priests blow their trumpets.
 2. Joshua says to the people: “*Shout*, for the LORD has given you the city.”
- B. But Joshua has some last minute instructions (6:17-19).
 1. Most of the officers of the Israelite army already know about these instructions.
 2. But it's almost as if Joshua wants to make very sure that his men know what they must and must not do.
 3. Why is Joshua concerned with such details?

—Because this is not ultimately Israel's war; but *God's*.
- C. We can pick out three crucial details in Joshua's instruction to the people.
 1. There is the order for destruction.
 - a. The whole city and everything that is inside it “shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction” (v 17).
 - b. The phrase “devoted to destruction” is itself a translation of the Hebrew word, *herem*, which means, “to ban.”
 - c. *Herem* is destruction that is religious in nature—it is destruction according to the express command of God.
 - d. Because Israel's war with Jericho and the rest of Canaan is ordered by God, destruction must be done according to God's express commands.
 - e. If Israel fails to destroy what God condemns, God will bring destruction on Israel herself.

—“But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction...”
 2. There is the command to spare Rahab and her family (v 17)

3. There is the command to devote the precious metals to the Lord.
 - a. “But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD” (see also Num 31:54; 1 Kgs 7:51; 1 Chron 29:8)
 - b. What can we learn from this rule that God gives?
 - i. Wealth is not evil by itself.
 - ii. God is the rightful owner of all our most valued possessions.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are Joshua’s last minute instructions to his men? (2) What does the Hebrew word *herem* mean? (3) Israel’s warfare is *herem* warfare; i.e. warfare commanded and regulated by God. What implications would this have for how Israel conducts the war?

IV. The Shout of Triumph (Joshua 6:20)

- A. The great moment arrives.
 1. “So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown....and the wall fell down flat...”
 2. Just as God parted the Red Sea and the Jordan for his people, God now parts the walls of Jericho.
- B. When the wall fell, “the people went up into the city...and they captured the city.”
- C. Israel did what the Lord has instructed them to do.
 —“Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.”
- D. It is good to be reminded that Israel is following instructions previously given by God in Deuteronomy 20:16-17.
 —“But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction...”
- E. What is the reason for the total destruction of each of these civilizations?
 1. Deuteronomy 20:18: “that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God” (Dt 20:18)
 2. The Lord does not want his people to be tempted by the evil cultures of Canaan.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What happens when Israel shouts? (2) What did Israel do when the walls of Jericho fell? (3) According to Deuteronomy 20:18, why does God require the full extermination of Canaanite civilization?

V. Take the Evilness of Sin and the Lordship of God Seriously!

- A. Why might we be uncomfortable at the extermination of sinners, even those who are seemingly innocent? Two possible reasons:
1. We fail to take the sinfulness of humankind seriously (Rom 3:10-18).
 - a. The Canaanites were not poor, innocent tree-huggers, who were victims of Israelite imperialism.
 - i. They were full-blown, hardcore haters of God.
 - ii. They were a violent culture that celebrated death—the cult of child-sacrifice (Lev 20:2).
 - iii. They revelled in sexual perversion (Lev 18:6-23).
 - iv. They practiced black magic. (If you haven't lived in a society where black magic is rampant, you don't know how bad it gets!)
 - v. They blatantly worshiped demons.
 - b. Canaanite culture was not harmless!!
—The Canaanites had reached a stage in their history where they were known for their inhumanity (Gen 15:16).
 - c. Because we are sinners, this destruction is also what we deserve.
 - i. Unless we have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, we too would have to pay for our sins.
—Luke 13:5: “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
 2. We still don't quite understand that God is actually sovereign.
 - a. Because God is sovereign, God has the moral and legal right to remove the lives of his enemies whenever he wishes.
 - b. Because we are sinners, we owe God the punishment that our sins deserve.
 - c. Instead of complaining about what God ordered Israel to do, we should be pleading with God for mercy.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are two possible reasons for our discomfort when we read of God's instruction to destroy Canaanite civilization? (2) What kind of people were the Canaanites? (3) Instead of complaining about what God ordered Israel to do, what ought to be our right response?

VI. Joshua 6:15-21 and the Future

- A. Israel's conquest of Jericho is itself a symbol of the Great Day of Judgment that is coming—the great Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. When the Lord Jesus returns, he will come not as a helpless baby, but as the majestic Son of God, the supreme Warrior-King (Rev 19:11-16).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is Israel's conquest of Jericho a symbol of? (2) According to Revelation 19:11-16, in what form will the Lord Jesus return?

VII. Receiving Jesus Christ as Our Victory Over the World

- A. The first and most important lesson of Joshua 6:15-21 is...*to receive Jesus Christ as our victory!*
- B. We Christians who are still in the world don't live in the seventh day of glory.
- C. But our Lord Jesus Christ has already ascended into final victory *for all of us*.
 1. By his resurrection, he has overcome the power of death.
 2. By his ascension, he has overcome the cosmic powers of evil and the world.
- D. Because we are joined to Christ, his victory is already ours.
 1. This truth is clearly taught in two places:
 - a. Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God...made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."
 - b. Colossians 3:1: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God..."
 2. Even though the title "Church Triumphant" is applied to the Church in heaven, the whole Church in heaven and on earth is already triumphant in Christ.
—Because the whole Church is represented in Christ, and Christ himself has already entered the age of the Sabbath.
- E. The first thing that God calls from us in Joshua 6 is to put our trust in Jesus Christ.
 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ was...
 - a. the perfect Israelite who obeyed all that God commanded (Phil 2:8).
 - b. the perfect Priest who taught God's Word faithfully (Jn 14:6).
 - c. the holy Warrior of God who fought Satan in the world (Mt 4:23-35).
 2. When we put our faith in Christ, God includes us in Christ's perfect work (Eph 2:8; Rom 5:19) and ensures our salvation in Christ.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the first and most important lesson of Joshua 6:15-21? (2) When we are joined to Christ by faith, the victory of Christ becomes ours. Do you accept this? Which Scripture passages teach this?

VIII. More Lessons for the Church Militant

- A. Joshua 6:15-21 has a few more lessons for the Church Militant.
- B. We need to regard ourselves as separated from the domain of Satan in the world (Col 1:13).
 - 1. This is an objective fact.
 - 2. Christians should not be too comfortable in this world, but should be alert for the subtle influences of the Evil One.
- C. We need to destroy sinful habits in our lives (Col 3:5-8; Eph 4:22; 4:25-30; 5:3, 4).
- D. We need to tell our unbelieving friends about salvation in the Lord.
 - 1. God does not call his children to destroy unbelievers today.
 - 2. God wants us to bring our unbelieving friends into the peace treaty with the Lord (Eph 2:17).

Joshua 6:15-21 is a picture of the glorious day of the Lord Jesus, when he comes with his holy ones to claim the world. God calls his children to receive their final victory over the powers of evil by receiving and resting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Along with that, he calls us to regard ourselves as separated from Satan's rule; to put to death our old sins; and to bring people into the Lord's peace treaty in Christ.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What other lessons does Joshua 6:15-21 have for us? (2) What is the relationship of Christians to the rule of Satan? (3) How do we deal with our sinful habits? (4) How should Christians relate to our unbelieving friends?