

## When God Leads – Part 1

### *Joshua 6*

**Introduction:** “*Joshua fought the battle of Jericho*” It’s a song that many have sung and a favorite of children and adults alike. It’s catchy, supernatural, and a song of victory, plus you can add hand motions if you want to. Joshua and the battle of Jericho is often what characterizes the whole of Joshua for us, and the battle for Jericho has caused a picture to be emblazoned on our minds. *If there was a movie made today of this battle, what do you think it would be like?* Movie makers have historically been infatuated with bringing Biblical stories to the big screen, often sacrificing the truth of the account for a story that is culturally viable (see: the movie *Noah* coming out soon). I would venture to guess that if a major motion picture was made of “**Jericho**” it would contain the familiar rhythm of a Hollywood script: a group of people who have little military experience, takes on the hardened war machine of a land that rightfully belongs to them, and through miraculous means, conquers all. Throw in some interpersonal drama, the wrongful death of a loved one, the need for revenge, and even the angle of a reformed prostitute, and you have a recipe for success (also a close following of *Braveheart*).

However, a careful reading of the real, Biblical account of Israel’s confrontation with the people of Canaan and the city of Jericho paints a much different story. Though we stand firm in the fact that this story is grounded in historical events that LITERALLY happened, the narrative of Joshua spends little time on the actual battle. In fact, the “**BATTLE OF JERICHO**” is really captured in 1 ½ verses (Josh. 6:20b-21). No sword play, sweet open field combat, or even room to room conquest is mentioned, but simply the fact that God’s leadership and plan was played out to perfection, and **the most unlikely victory was given in a most improbable way**. Joshua plays the role of God’s instrument and Jericho is the setting for God’s providing victory for His people. The battle of Jericho was decisive for the people of Israel because they learned a valuable lesson - **When God Leads - True success follows**

### The Setting of Jericho:

Before delving into the particulars of the story, it is good to step back and look at why Jericho was so important to God’s plan and Israel’s success. Often we get wrapped up into Biblical stories and they almost seem fanciful, mystical, or the stuff of legend instead of what they really are: actual events that happened in time and space, that were carried out by real people, to display the work of a transcendent God who makes Himself known to His people. Jericho was a miraculous story, but it served a very strategic purpose for the rest of the conquering of the land.

Jericho controlled the ascent into the hill country and was in a position to guard the rest of the land from an Eastern approach. There is a systematic way in which God directed Israel to conquer the land, not simply Him leveling random cities. This kept the tension between God’s sovereign hand and the constant dependency of the people to carry out that plan. When you think of Jericho as a city, think more of a **fortress**. It was not very large, and in fact only had a footprint of about **9 acres** (*see the aerial photo*) which is equivalent to the entire Costco parking lot in Simi. The city would have been sprawled out around the fortification, and when attacked, the people would come inside the walled city. It possessed:

- a **king** and **mighty men of valor** (Josh 6:2), which means they had an experienced army
- a location on *top of a hill*, giving it the high ground in battle
- a double set of walls - the **out wall** was 6 feet thick, and the **inner wall** was 12 feet thick, with about 12 feet in between, where houses would be build for extra fortification (*see photo*)

- an almost **impossible set of options** to achieve victory - either they could find a way to go through or over the walls by making a battering ram or siege ramp (*see photo*), or they could lay siege to the city and wait them out. Both of these options would be costly in terms of time and loss of human life.

This is what Joshua and the people faced. They had to conquer Jericho so they could drive a wedge through the land of Canaan, cutting the south off from the north and providing a more effective means to conquer the land (see photo of Jericho and Ai). This is where we pick up the narrative heading into Joshua 6: would the people follow God's lead or do it their own way. This is **still the same question we ask ourselves today**: *are we willing to yield ourselves to God's lead, or do we trust our own mind, heart, and feelings?* When God leads, we do not, and when God leads, there is much benefit. That is what we want to learn in Joshua 6.

## I. **When God Leads – Victory Follows**

### A. As seen in the leading of Christ the LORD (Joshua 5:13-15)

**Joshua 5:13-15** When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" <sup>14</sup> And he said, "**No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.**" And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" <sup>15</sup> And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, **for the place where you are standing is holy.**" And Joshua did so.

There is an interesting story that leads into the story of Jericho. After the Passover and his people healing from their circumcision, Joshua is met by a **man with a sword in his hand**. This was clearly a warrior, but it was like no other warrior. This man identified himself as the **commander of the LORD's army**, used language consistent with God Himself (I AM - Exodus 3; John 6:35), and **received worship from Joshua** and said the ground Joshua was standing on was holy ground. This was not an angel because no angel would allow himself to be worshipped (Revelation 22:8-9). No, this was God communicating to Joshua in the form of a man, and that is called a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, or what is referred to as a *Christophany*. There are 2 important lessons that Joshua drank in meeting the commander of the LORD's army:

- **This was God's battle, not his** - Notice how the Commander answered Joshua's question, "Are you for us or our adversaries?" **NEITHER!** In other words, God does not choose sides, and though He would deliver the victory, it is clear that Joshua was working for God, not the other way around. This is huge for us to remember. God does not join our ventures, our plans, and our dreams, we join His. We don't start ventures and **then** hope God joins us, we vet out all of our decisions and make sure that they conform to His Word and His will.
- **This was a spiritual battle, not just physical** - God gave Joshua the same experience He gave Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3. That is where Moses realized that God is indeed holy and must be worshipped. Joshua came to grips with the fact that this battle was about worship and following the lead of the battle commander, who was Jesus Himself. Just as Jesus was the rock that followed Moses (1 Cor. 10:4) and gave them spiritual drink, so this battle was truly being conducted by the LORD. All of life is worship, and we must recognize that every physical

venture we engage in is far more than what we simply see, but is something God is doing in what cannot be seen.

### B. As seen in the centrality of the Ark

Not only would there be victory in recognizing the leading of the pre-incarnate Christ, it was important to remember that God was central in the battle for the land and life in the land. The Ark represented God's presence, and it was the Ark that lead the people across the river onto the banks of the Promised Land. But as the people walked around the wall, it seems clear that the formation put the Ark at the center of the march:

People   ➡   Soldiers   ➡   THE ARK   ➡   Priests   ➡   Soldiers

God was to be the central and focal point of the procession. His presence was to be undoubted by the people of Israel and the city of Jericho, and by being central He would receive the credit for the victory.

## II. When God Leads – *Silence is Golden*

The second pronounced lesson of God's leading in this battle was the unique way in which God had the people march around the city. They would march in a procession around this small block once a day for six days, until the seventh day when they walked around it seven times. While walking around the city, the people were not say anything or make any noise, **"But Joshua commanded the people 'You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then shall you shout.'"** (Josh. 6:10) The only sound would be the blowing of trumpets which were made of rams horns (*see photo*). This would have been very difficult, since they would walk around the city quietly, all the while wondering when this would come to an end, since Joshua simply told them to do it until he said otherwise. ***Why silence? Why was God so adamant that the people marched silently?*** Silence is often a difficult thing to possess and maintain in our culture, but it is also difficult to possess in any culture.

### A. Why silence is so deafening

Out of all the commands given to Joshua and the people, this may have been the hardest. To have silence we must stop talking, stop complaining, and give up the right to be heard. For Israel it meant they could not answer back any of the taunts they received from their enemy on top of the wall. they had to simply walk, taking in the daunting obstacle in front of them without lifting their voice to the Lord. For us it is so difficult because we want our voice heard, we want to talk things out, we want to hear ourselves process. Silence is difficult because noise goes down and our thoughts are magnified, yet we wait on the Lord.

### B. Why silence is so crucial

**Psalm 46:10-11** "Be still, and know that **I am God**. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; **the God of Jacob is our fortress.**"

Silence, or being still, is essential to remember who God is and that He is the One who leads. Silence forces us to **listen**, to hear what God says through His Word and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the truth. I'm sure Israel had all kinds of questions for Joshua, God, and each other, but silence meant they had to continue to trust and follow. Silence helps us remember that God is in control, and even though His ways don't make sense sometimes, we are in the infinitely best possible place by following His lead.

How do you do with silence? Do you have time in your life to listen? Do you always have to have noise going on around you or have words spoken around you? We often miss what God is doing or wants to do because we fail to listen and comprehend what His will is. We fail to comprehend because we do not know what His Word says and what He would have us do. When we rest in God's leading and entrust ourselves to His will, silence is golden, because silence helps me remember who the true leader is.

### III. **When God Leads – Faith Flourishes**

The story of God's victory at Jericho is a clear illustration of His miraculous power. The text is clear that on the seventh day the people walked around the walls seven times. After the seventh revolution, Joshua commanded the people to shout (6:16) and the wall fell down flat so that the people went straight into the city and devoted it to destruction (which we will unpack next week) (6:20). This begs the question: **how did the wall fall down?** Some, who refuse to acknowledge God's miraculous power, believe that it was the massive shout of hundreds of thousands of people that caused vibrations to knock down the wall. Others believe it was an ancient fault line caused an earthquake that knocked down both walls around the city. However, there is not "natural" phenomena that could account for these massive walls to fall down flat, but happen to leave the house of Rahab standing (6:17). This was clearly the hand of the Lord. But what was the significance of the marching? Why have the people march around (seemingly like crazy people) before knocking down the wall? Why not just do it first?

**The answer is: Our faith is precious to God, and when we follow His lead, our faith grows**

**What caused the wall to fall down? Faith**

**Hebrews 11:30** By faith the walls of Jericho **fell down** after they had been encircled for seven days.

**Why does God call us to do and go through unique circumstances:** *because our faith is precious*

**1 Peter 1:6-7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,<sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith- **more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire-** may be found **to result** in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Why is making sure that we embrace all that God has called us to instead of doing it our own way:**

*Because obedience to God's Word is an exercise in faith*

**1 Samuel 15:22** And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.**

This verse in 1 Samuel recounts the story when God told King Saul to devote the Amalekites to destruction, yet Saul did what he thought was best. Under the guise of worship (1 Sam. 15:15), self-deception or self-delusion (I **did** all that God commanded) (15:13), and shifting the blame to the people (15:22), Saul did not do all that God said but convinced himself that he knew better. Maybe Saul convinced himself that he was compassionate and loving, and that God was just mean. Maybe Saul thought that he could convince God that he was not really greedy if he gave some of the spoil as an offering. Maybe he thought he could do his own thing and as long as no one saw or knew, he could get away with it. Whatever the reason, Saul illustrated something we struggle with: every time we sin we take matters into our own hands. We fail to believe that obedience is better, that Jesus is better, and

that God is more pleased by obedience to what **HE calls us to**, rather than what we want to do. Pick any area of life, and we struggle with this. We convince ourselves that our time is our own, our money, our life, our future, and our family, and we convince ourselves that as long as we give God part of those things, we are ok. But the truth is, He calls us to give it all and to trust Him with everything. This is why God operates outside of our economy of reason, because we default to selfish pride, and He brings us to a point where we have to trust Him, and that is the most glorious place to be.

#### IV. **When God Leads – Obedience Endures**

Finally, we learn that obedience is not something that we just do once but that becomes part of our life. Imagine if you were part of the procession around the wall. I'm always captivated by the 4th and 5th days. The first few days are filled with excitement, novelty, and expectation. But then doubt sets in. The mocking starts. Walking in silence, you begin to think, *"maybe this is crazy. Maybe we are a bunch of self-deluded, simple minded, narrow-thinking, backward people. Maybe we should stop marching. Maybe we should go back to worldly convention and stop this madness. Maybe God is outdated or not real at all. Maybe we need to come up with a better way."* Those were the days when obedience did not yield an immediate result, and without immediate results, doubt is heightened.

**What do we learn about faith driven obedience from this long, repetitive march around this fortress?** We learn **perspective** and **perseverance**.

##### **A. Perspective – Obey long term, one day at a time**

Obedience to God is not something that should be fleeting but is a lifelong, growing, upward venture (see Hebrews 3:6, 14, 12:1-2). But it is something that is lived out day in and day out. We take on each day by faith, believing that our faith is precious to God, that He will always give us the grace we need, and we follow the example of Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2), who endured the cross with joy by walking faithfully each day.

Sometimes we fail to obey because we don't see the benefit. Sometimes we fail to obey because it is tiring and hard. Sometimes we fail to obey because it seems too overwhelming or daunting of a task.

**But the key to obedience is to view it as a daily opportunity to exercise faith in God as our greatest joy, and to trust in Christ as our greatest treasure.** As we develop this desire driven discipline, we begin to view life not through the lens of circumstance (good day - God's good; bad day - God must not care), but see every circumstance as an opportunity to grow in faith.

"Seeming failure did not warrant them in adopting *other* measures; they must adhere strictly to the divine directions unto the end." A.W. Pink

##### **B. Perseverance – Trust timing to God**

Sometimes it would be easier to know when certain things would change or come to an end when faced with the decision to obey. If we knew that our pain would end in \_\_\_\_\_ days, we would have a better attitude. If we knew that our loneliness would end by meeting \_\_\_\_\_, we would make the most of our singleness now. If we knew that God would answer our prayer in the way we prayed it, we would trust Him more. The problem is, these are opposed to walking in faith. We are not given assurances this way, but are called to trust God with the outcomes, but we are called to continue to obey.

All of this is possible when God leads. The question is: who is leading your life? Are you trying to get God on your side, or are you yielding yourself to His? When God leads, true success follows.

**Commitment Points:**

- How does God lead you in all of your decisions? How do you determine His will? Are there areas of your life that you make plans, carry them out, and finish before determining if that is what God wants you to do? How do we make sure we are following God and not asking Him to follow us?
- Is silence golden for you? Do you have time that you stop and listen to what God says in His Word? How do you carve out time in a busy day to be quiet? What does that look like?
- What is hard about daily obedience? Where do we find motivation every day to obey, even when we may not see results? What are we supposed to do when we don't want to obey, or don't feel like it? Is it good to obey even when we have no desire to do so?

**When God Leads – Part 1  
Joshua 6**

**I. When God Leads - *Victory Follows***

a. As seen in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ the LORD (Joshua 5:13-15)

b. As seen in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Ark

**II. When God Leads – *Silence is Golden***

a. Why silence is so \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why silence is so \_\_\_\_\_

**III. When God Leads – *Faith Flourishes***

**IV. When God Leads – *Obedience Endures***

a. \_\_\_\_\_ - Obey long term, one day at a time

b. \_\_\_\_\_ - Trust timing to God