

Conquest

Joshua 6

The conquest begins as Israel marches on the city of Jericho. The Church has been called to holy war, to advance Christ's kingdom, ever since the Lord said to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15). John Chrysostom said, "You are but a poor soldier of Christ if you think you can overcome without fighting, and suppose you can have the crown without the conflict." Christ's command to disciple the nations means the faithful conquest of the gospel.

Summary of the Text

Jericho is fortified, and the Lord tells Joshua He has given it, along with the king and mighty men, into his hand (vv. 1-2). The men of war will march around the city once a day for six days while seven priests with seven trumpets of rams' horns will go before the ark. On the seventh day they'll march around Jericho seven times, the priests will blow the trumpets, the people will shout, the wall will fall down, and the people will take the city (vv. 3-5). Joshua instructs the people to do as the Lord says and to spare Rahab and her house. They will abstain from the accursed things and put all the silver, gold, vessels of bronze, and iron into the treasury of the Lord (vv. 6-19). It comes to pass as the Lord said, and they destroy the city, both young and old, and all the animals, except Rahab the harlot, her relatives, her father's household and all she had; she dwells in Israel to this day (vv. 20-25). Joshua then pronounces a curse upon anyone who rebuilds Jericho; he would lay its foundation with his firstborn and its gates with his youngest (v. 26). The Lord was with Joshua and word got out (v. 27).

Fighting from Victory

A famous fortified city filled with fighting men looks impregnable (v. 1). But God had put fear into their hearts as they had heard of Israel's exodus, victories over Og and Bashan, and the recent crossing of the Jordan, so there is no element of surprise. The Lord tells Joshua to look at it and believe: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor" (v. 2). We have to read the story as present within it. We're in hostile territory, manna has ceased, and the walls are thick and high. The Lord tells Joshua not just to fight for victory, but from the victory He has already promised. You can see the direct connection between what Joshua believes and how Jericho responds. If he doesn't believe, tries to compromise, or fails to instruct the nation, how can this work? Faith moves mountains and does so by first believing that they can be moved. The greater Joshua schools the disciples in this constantly. Five thousand men plus women and children, all hungry from listening to Jesus all day are really hungry, so He says to the disciples: "You give them something to eat" (Mk. 6:37). He knows they don't have the answers but expects them to figure it out—to believe, rely on Him, and get it done. This includes confessions of faith—"But who do you say that I am?" (Mk. 8:29)—and in what He has done in you: "Likewise you also, *reckon yourselves* to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). This is not blind optimism, but joyful, realistic faith, the kind that Jesus had before He went to the cross: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). Joshua and Israel believe God gave them the land. The apostles believe that Jesus possesses the world and so therefore they go to disciple the nations (Matt. 28:19-20). We rest in what Christ has done, and from that unshakeable victory, we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We go out and conquer by the blood of the Lamb.

Just Cause & Just Conduct

The conquest of Jericho and Canaan is the destruction of a people because of their ethnicity (genocide). Rahab and her household, later the Gibeonites, and no doubt many others chose to repent of their iniquity

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and make peace with the living God. There are many false teachers who want to “uncouple” from the Old Testament because of passages like Joshua 6, but this simply exposes their unbelief. The Canaanites practiced child sacrifice, ritual prostitution, homosexuality, sexual slavery, and more, and we see the depravity of their culture revive when Israel worships their gods (e.g. 2 Kgs. 21:6). These Canaanitic nations were similar to what Cortez and the Spanish found in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan where the blood of living sacrifices ran down the temple steps. In our society gruesome sacrifices are made to idols of sexual immorality and so-called science as seen in the November 21st New York Post story which published emails between Planned Parenthood and the University of California San Diego. These include negotiations for the price of fetal parts torn from six-month-old pre-born babies. The Lord gives life and in His perfect justice He is allowed to take it away when He sees fit. But we are not. We must come to terms that every person dies because we have rebelled against God, and the wages of our sin is death. The Lord wants Jericho razed to the ground as *cherem*, a thing devoted to destruction (v. 17). He was patient for a long time, but now this culture of death must die, as anyone watching this story without a seared conscience would agree. This did not give Israel a free-for-all for sin and plunder; they were in fact sent to extinguish exactly that kind of wickedness. They may not take anything for themselves lest they become accursed (v. 18). We learn not to make compromises with idols and how a culture of death grows.

Worship is Warfare

Worship is always at the forefront of God’s mission. The ark is mentioned ten times in this chapter. It goes forward, and Israel is not to shout until it has gone around the city and Joshua gives the word (vv. 10-11). The number seven is strong here and throughout the Old Testament. The Sabbath was on the seventh day and it’s the biblical number of completion and rest. Seven weeks after Passover is Pentecost, the harvest celebration. The seventh year is a sabbatical year, and after seven of these, seven times seven, is the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). In the seventh month there is the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and final pilgrim feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. Seven priests with seven trumpets, not the silver kind used to move camp, but rams’ horns to announce festivals and the year of Jubilee announce the taking of the new land. Israel rejected pagan magic and manipulation, the kind that engaged unholy spirits (Deut. 18:10). But God can empower leaders to out-magic the Egyptian magicians, to defeat armies by holding up a staff, use feet of the priests to back up the Jordan, and now command them to march around walls and blow horns to topple Jericho. These weren’t clever tricks, but the obedience of faith: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:30-31). Worship the Lord faithfully and the mission of Christ goes forward. We don’t invade Canaanite cities and devote them to destruction anymore. We don’t war against flesh and blood—our fight is much greater: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Jesus conquered sin and death by dying Himself, taking our sins, so that the good news of the gospel—peace with God—would conquer the world.