



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

— REASON TOGETHER STUDY —



THE WALLS OF JERICHO

— JOSHUA 5:13–6:27 —

Before the walls fell, Joshua did.



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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Pastor & Teacher

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

THE WALLS OF JERICHO

Before the Walls Fell

Joshua 5:13 through Joshua 6:27

What must fall before the walls can fall?

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
Pastor & Teacher

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you have worshiped with us many times...

or whether this is your first time with us...

you are welcome here.

We are grateful for every honored guest who has joined us today.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father...

You are holy.

You are faithful.

You are merciful.

And You are God.

Forgive us for the times we have asked You to approve what we had already decided.

Forgive us for trusting our plans more than Your Word.

Teach us to fall before Your authority...

to listen when You speak...

and to obey even when we do not understand what You are doing.

Open the Scriptures to us today.

Lead us to Jesus Christ.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our opening Scripture is Joshua chapter five, beginning with verse thirteen.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come."

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?"

"And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Most people know something about the walls of Jericho.

Children sing about Joshua fighting the battle.

Pictures show soldiers marching around a city.

Priests lift trumpets to their mouths.

The people shout.

And enormous walls tumble to the ground.

But who really fought the battle of Jericho?

Joshua led.

Israel marched.

The priests sounded the trumpets.

The people shouted.

But God gave the city.

And God brought down the walls.

We usually begin this story in Joshua chapter six.

The Bible begins it a little earlier.

Before the wall fell...

a man fell.

Before Joshua stood before Jericho...

Joshua fell before the Lord.

That is the first of four falls we will see today.

Joshua fell before the Captain.

Jericho's walls fell before God.

Rahab fell upon the mercy of God.

And Achan fell because he disobeyed God.

Those four falls reveal far more than a strategy for overcoming an obstacle.

They reveal the authority of God...

the faithfulness of God...

the holiness of God...

and the mercy of God.

Before we reach the first fall, notice what happened before Joshua approached Jericho.
Israel had crossed the Jordan River.
The nation finally stood inside the land God had promised.
A military commander might have said...
Move immediately.
Strike while the enemy is afraid.
Do not give Jericho time to prepare.
But God did not hurry Israel into battle.
Joshua chapter five tells us that the new generation of men was circumcised.
Israel renewed its covenant identification.
Then Israel kept the Passover.
Before they celebrated victory over Jericho...
they remembered deliverance from Egypt.
They remembered that they had been slaves.
They remembered the blood upon the doors.
They remembered the sea opening.
They remembered that their freedom did not come from their strength.
It came from God.
Then the manna ceased.
For forty years, God had fed them in the wilderness.
Now the form of His provision changed.
But their Provider had not changed.
Before conquest came consecration.
Before warfare came worship.
Before God addressed the wall in front of Israel...
He addressed the hearts of the people.
We often begin with the thing standing in front of us.
Lord, remove this problem.
Lord, open this door.
Lord, change this person.
Lord, make this plan work.

But God may begin somewhere else.

He may begin within us.

This does not mean that every difficulty is caused by personal sin.

Job's friends made that mistake.

It does mean that our first responsibility is not to control our circumstances.

Our first responsibility is to walk rightly before God.

Then we come to Joshua chapter five, verse thirteen.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked."

Joshua was near the city.

Perhaps he was studying the walls.

Perhaps he was looking for a weakness.

Perhaps he was asking how former slaves and wilderness travelers could take a fortified city.

The Bible does not tell us what Joshua was thinking.

It tells us what Joshua saw.

"Behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand."

Joshua did not meet a consultant holding a plan.

He met a Commander holding a sword.

Joshua approached and asked...

"Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

That sounds like a reasonable question.

There was Israel.

There was Jericho.

Joshua wanted to know which side this man supported.

The answer was one word.

"Nay."

No.

Joshua asked an either-or question.

Are You for us...

or are You for them?

The Captain refused Joshua's categories.

"But as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come."

Joshua wanted to know whether the Captain would join his side.
The Captain revealed that Joshua must come under His authority.
God did not arrive to become another member of Joshua's army.
Joshua's army belonged to God.
We often ask the same kind of question Joshua asked.
Lord, are You on my side in this disagreement?
Lord, will You support the choice I have made?
Lord, will You prove that I was right?
Lord, will You defeat the person who opposes me?
There are times when Scripture clearly identifies right and wrong.
But even when our position is right...
God does not become our instrument.
We belong to Him.
The greater question is not whether God has joined our side.
The greater question is whether we have surrendered to His.
God is not a weapon we employ to accomplish our plans.
He is Lord.
Joshua's response changed immediately.
"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship."
The first thing that fell at Jericho was not the wall.
It was Joshua.
He had approached as a commander.
He fell as a servant.
He had asked whose side the man supported.
Now he asked a different question.
"What saith my lord unto his servant?"
That is the language of surrender.
You are my Lord.
I am Your servant.
What You say is authoritative.
My responsibility is obedience.

Notice that Joshua surrendered before he heard the battle plan.

He did not say...

Explain the plan first.

Let me decide whether it sounds reasonable.

Let me compare Your strategy with my strategy.

Then I will determine whether to obey.

Conditional surrender is not complete surrender.

Faith does not require God to explain Himself before we recognize His authority.

The Captain said...

"Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

The words take us back to Moses at the burning bush.

Moses was told to remove his shoes because he stood upon holy ground.

Now Joshua heard the same command.

The soil outside Jericho was not holy because of its chemical composition.

It was holy because of the presence of God.

Many conservative interpreters understand this Captain as a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

Joshua worshipped Him.

The worship was received.

The ground was holy.

And the Captain spoke with divine authority.

The passage calls Him the Captain of the Lord's host.

It does not directly use the name Jesus.

So we should hold the conclusion carefully.

But we should not miss what is clear.

Joshua stood in the presence of divine holiness.

And Joshua obeyed.

Verse fifteen ends simply...

"And Joshua did so."

That short statement prepares us for everything that follows.

God spoke.

Joshua obeyed.

Now look at Joshua chapter six.

"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in."

From the human point of view, Jericho was closed.

Fortified.

Guarded.

Inaccessible.

The wall told Joshua what could not be done.

Then God spoke.

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho."

The walls were still standing.

The gates were still closed.

The king was still inside.

The soldiers were still prepared.

Yet God said...

I have given.

God's promise was more certain than Jericho's wall.

But we must be careful here.

Joshua could believe that Jericho would fall because God had specifically said that Jericho would fall.

Joshua did not invent the promise.

He received it.

Biblical faith does not create a promise and ask God to honor it.

Biblical faith believes the promise God has given.

Presumption says...

I want this, so God must give it.

Faith says...

God has spoken, so I will trust Him.

You may confidently trust God's character.

You may trust His written Word.

You may trust His promise of salvation.

You may trust His presence with His children.

You may trust His wisdom when you do not understand His methods.
But you may not turn every personal desire into a promise from God.
Then the Lord gave Joshua the plan.
The men of war would march around the city once a day for six days.
Seven priests would carry seven trumpets of rams' horns.
The Ark of the Covenant would be carried in the procession.
On the seventh day, they would march around the city seven times.
The priests would make a long blast with the trumpets.
The people would shout.
And the wall would fall down flat.
This was not ordinary military strategy.
There were no siege ramps.
No ladders.
No attempt to undermine the wall.
No battering ram.
God chose a method that would leave no room for Israel to boast.
There was no battering ram because God intended to leave no doubt about who brought the wall down.
The armed men were present.
The priests were present.
The people were present.
But the Ark stood at the center of the procession.
The story was not centered upon Joshua's personality.
It was not centered upon the strength of Israel's army.
It was centered upon the presence and authority of the Lord.
Israel did not bring God along for its battle.
God was leading Israel into His battle.
Seven appears repeatedly.
Seven priests.
Seven trumpets.
Seven days.

Seven circuits on the seventh day.

The repeated number communicates completeness and deliberate divine order.

But it is not a secret code.

The trumpets were not magical.

The shout was not magical.

The number was not magical.

The power belonged to God.

Joshua received the instructions and passed them to the people.

The people did not form a committee to improve God's plan.

They did not demand a strategy that looked more reasonable.

They began to march.

Then Joshua gave another unusual command.

"Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout."

Scripture does not explain why the people had to remain silent.

Perhaps the silence prevented disorder.

Perhaps it restricted complaining.

Perhaps it eliminated human boasting.

Perhaps it focused attention upon the Ark and the trumpets.

Those are reasonable possibilities.

They are not stated explanations.

We should never speak with certainty where Scripture has remained silent.

What we know is that silence was part of their obedience.

Sometimes faith speaks.

Sometimes faith shouts.

And sometimes faith remains quiet and obeys.

There is a time to testify.

There is also a time to stop explaining what God should do and quietly obey what He has said.

The first day, Israel marched around Jericho.

Then they returned to camp.

The wall remained standing.

The second day, they marched again.
The wall remained standing.
The same was true after the third day.
The fourth day.
The fifth day.
And the sixth day.
The Bible does not record the Israelites complaining.
We should not invent words for them.
What the Bible records is continued obedience.
Nothing visible happened for six days.
But obedience was happening every day.
Faithfulness is not measured only by visible progress.
Israel did not receive a new promise every morning.
They continued obeying the word God had already given.
On the seventh day they rose early.
They marched seven times.
Including the first six days, Israel completed thirteen circuits around Jericho.
Even on the seventh day, the first circuit produced no recorded change.
Neither did the second.
Or the third.
Or the fourth.
Or the fifth.
Or the sixth.
There are times when obedience appears repetitive.
You pray.
You tell the truth.
You honor your marriage.
You forgive.
You raise your children Biblically.
You serve when no one notices.
You open your Bible again.

You do what God has commanded even when you cannot yet see the result.

But persistence is not automatically faith.

A person can persist in stubbornness.

A person can persist in error.

A person can persist in personal ambition.

Persistence becomes Biblical faith when we persist in what God has commanded.

Then came the appointed moment.

Joshua said...

"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city."

Joshua did not say...

Shout so that the Lord will give you the city.

He said...

Shout because the Lord has given you the city.

The shout did not manipulate God.

The shout responded to God.

Israel was not shouting to create the victory.

Israel shouted because God had promised the victory.

Verse twenty says...

"So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets."

"And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat."

That is the second fall.

Jericho's walls fell before God.

Hebrews chapter eleven, verse thirty explains...

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

By faith does not mean that faith was a physical force that pushed stones to the ground.

It means Israel trusted God enough to do what He commanded.

Their faith did not contain the power to move the wall.

Their faith rested in the God who possessed that power.

Now we come to the part of the story that children's pictures often avoid.

Jericho was not an empty fortress.

People lived inside those walls.

Joshua chapter six records their destruction.

We cannot celebrate the falling wall while pretending no one stood behind it.

How can this judgment be reconciled with the goodness of God?

Genesis chapter fifteen helps us understand the setting.

God told Abraham that his descendants would not immediately receive the land.

He said...

"For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Generations passed between that statement and the fall of Jericho.

God's judgment was not an impatient outburst.

It followed centuries of patience.

Jericho had also heard what God had done.

Rahab said that the people knew about the Red Sea.

They knew about Israel's victories east of Jordan.

Their hearts melted with fear.

The destruction of Jericho was a specific act of divine judgment under a direct divine command.

It does not authorize Christians to conduct religious warfare.

The church does not advance by the sword.

We advance through the Gospel...

through prayer...

through truth...

through love...

and through faithful Christian witness.

God is the Creator and Judge.

He possesses an authority over life that we do not possess.

And even inside a city under judgment, God extended mercy.

That brings us to the third fall.

Rahab fell upon the mercy of God.

We met Rahab in Joshua chapter two.

She was a Canaanite.

She was a woman with a sinful past.

She lived in the city that stood against Israel.

But she had heard what Israel's God had done.

Rahab told the spies...

"I know that the LORD hath given you the land."

Then she confessed...

"The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

Everyone in Jericho had heard.

Many trembled.

Rahab believed.

The same truth that produced terror throughout Jericho produced faith in Rahab.

Her faith did not remain a private opinion.

She received the spies.

She hid them.

She risked her life.

She confessed the true God.

She asked for mercy.

She gathered her family.

She displayed the scarlet cord.

And she remained in the appointed place of safety.

Hebrews says...

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not."

James says that her works demonstrated her faith.

Rahab did not earn mercy by helping the spies.

Her actions revealed that her confession was real.

We are saved by grace through faith.

But the faith that receives grace changes what we do.

The scarlet cord marked Rahab's house.

Many sermons identify that cord directly with the blood of Christ.

It can provide a meaningful Gospel illustration.

But the New Testament never explicitly declares that the cord was a prophecy of Christ's blood.

We should say what Scripture says.

The cord was the appointed sign.

It identified the house.

And displaying it showed that Rahab trusted the promise.

Joshua chapter two gives us another remarkable detail.

"Her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall."

Her house stood upon the very structure that would collapse.

Scripture does not explain the architectural details of its preservation.

It tells us the outcome.

The wall fell.

Rahab was brought out alive.

The wall Jericho trusted could not protect Jericho.

The falling wall could not prevent God from protecting Rahab.

The safest place in Jericho was not behind its strongest defense.

It was inside the house resting upon God's promise.

Joshua sent the same two spies to bring Rahab and her family out.

In all the noise of victory...

in all the movement of soldiers...

in the destruction of an entire city...

one promise to one woman was not forgotten.

God remembers individuals in the midst of His largest purposes.

Rahab was brought out of Jericho.

Then she was brought into Israel.

Matthew chapter one places her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Rahab's past explained why she needed grace.

It did not place her beyond grace.

Her nationality did not exclude her.

Her location inside a condemned city did not prevent God from saving her.

That is good news for every person who thinks...

You do not know what I have done.

You do not know where I have been.

You do not know how far from God I have lived.

Rahab did not possess a respectable past to offer God.

She trusted His mercy.

But the story has one more fall.

Rahab was a Canaanite who believed God.

Achan was an Israelite who disobeyed God.

Joshua had warned the people not to take what was devoted to the Lord.

The silver, gold, brass and iron belonged in the Lord's treasury.

Israel was not permitted to turn divine judgment into personal profit.

Then Joshua chapter seven begins...

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing."

Achan saw a Babylonish garment.

He saw silver.

He saw gold.

He coveted them.

He took them.

And he hid them beneath his tent.

At Jericho, the enemy was strong.

The city was fortified.

Israel obeyed.

And God gave victory.

At Ai, the enemy appeared weak.

Israel expected an easy victory.

Sin remained hidden in the camp.

And Israel was defeated.

That is the fourth fall.

Achan fell because he disobeyed God.

An enemy outside the camp could not defeat obedient Israel.

Sin inside the camp could.

The wall in front of us may not be as dangerous as the disobedience within us.

Yesterday's victory does not make today's obedience unnecessary.

We must add an important safeguard.

Not every hardship is caused by a particular hidden sin.
Not every defeat proves that someone secretly disobeyed God.
We must not become like Job's friends and accuse suffering people without evidence.
The application is self-examination.
It is not careless accusation.
Rahab and Achan stand beside one another as a sobering contrast.
Rahab was outside Israel, but she believed God.
Achan was inside Israel, but he disobeyed God.
Rahab protected the messengers connected to God's purpose.
Achan stole what God had reserved.
Rahab's faith brought her into Israel.
Achan's sin brought judgment into Israel.
Religious association cannot replace faith and obedience.
Joshua chapter six closes with a warning.
Joshua pronounced a curse upon the man who would rebuild Jericho from its foundation to its gates.
Generations later, during the reign of Ahab, a man named Hiel rebuilt it.
First Kings chapter sixteen records that he laid its foundation in Abiram his firstborn...
and set up its gates in Segub his youngest son.
God's warning did not expire because generations passed before someone challenged it.
Now gather the four falls together.
Joshua fell before the Captain.
Jericho's walls fell before God.
Rahab fell upon the mercy of God.
Achan fell because he disobeyed God.
Jericho reveals that God is sovereign.
He commanded the army.
He determined the method.
He gave the city.
He brought down the wall.
Jericho reveals that God is faithful.
He kept His promise to Israel.

He honored the promise made to Rahab.
He fulfilled His warning concerning Jericho's rebuilding.
Jericho reveals that God is holy.
Joshua fell before His presence.
Jericho experienced His judgment.
Achan learned that His commands could not be ignored.
Jericho reveals that God is merciful.
Rahab heard.
Rahab believed.
Rahab acted.
Rahab was rescued.
Rahab was received among God's people.
What, then, does Jericho say to us?
It does not tell you to march around your problem for seven days.
It does not promise that shouting will make every difficulty disappear.
It does not teach that every obstacle is a wall God has promised to remove.
It tells us to fall before God's authority.
Listen to what He has actually said.
Trust His Word.
Obey without demanding immediate results.
Refuse to hide sin within.
And take refuge in the mercy He provides.
Ask yourself...
Have I been asking God to join my side instead of surrendering to His?
Am I trusting a promise God has made...
or an outcome I have invented?
Am I continuing in obedience when I cannot see visible progress?
Am I concentrating upon an external problem while concealing an internal sin?
And have I taken refuge in Jesus Christ?
Rahab could not save herself by strengthening Jericho's wall.
She could not erase her past.

She could not stop judgment from coming.

But she could believe the truth she had heard...

and take refuge in the promise she had received.

Our refuge is not a scarlet cord.

Our refuge is Jesus Christ.

The holy God who judged Jericho is the holy God before whom every sinner must answer.

The Bible says...

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The mercy shown to Rahab points us toward the mercy God offers to sinners.

Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died upon the cross for our sins.

He received the judgment we deserved.

He was buried.

And on the third day, He rose again.

The Bible says...

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

It also says...

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Rahab's past did not place her beyond mercy.

Neither does yours.

Turn from sin.

Trust Jesus Christ.

Receive the forgiveness you cannot earn.

If you desire to trust Christ today, you may speak to Him from your heart.

The prayer does not save you.

Jesus saves the sinner who comes to Him in faith.

You may pray...

Lord Jesus...

I know that I am a sinner.

I cannot save myself.

I believe that You died for my sins...

that You were buried...

and that You rose again.
I turn from my sin and place my trust in You.
Forgive me.
Save me.
Teach me to follow You.
I ask this in the name of Jesus.
Amen.
For those who already know Christ...
the walls of Jericho leave us with a question.
What must fall first?
We want the obstacle to fall.
God may be calling our pride to fall.
We want the opposition to surrender.
God may be calling us to surrender.
We want a new plan.
God may be calling us to obey what He has already said.
You may be living through the first day around the wall.
Or the sixth.
You may see no visible change.
Do not invent a promise God has not made.
But do not abandon a command God has clearly given.
Tell the truth.
Keep your word.
Love your family.
Forgive as Christ forgave you.
Pray.
Serve.
Open the Bible again tomorrow.
And leave the outcome in the hands of God.
Let us close in prayer.
Father, You are the Captain.

We are Your servants.

Bring our pride to the ground before Your holiness.

Forgive us for asking You to bless decisions we have never submitted to You.

Keep us from turning faith into a formula.

Teach us to distinguish Your promises from our desires.

Give patience to those who are obeying without seeing visible progress.

Give courage to those who must act upon Your Word.

Expose the sins we have attempted to hide.

Lead us to confession and cleansing.

Thank You for the mercy that brought Rahab out of Jericho.

Thank You for the greater mercy offered through Jesus Christ.

We pray for every person who trusted Christ today.

Lead them into Your Word and into fellowship with Your people.

Help us remember that You are sovereign...

You are faithful...

You are holy...

and You are merciful.

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

The walls of Jericho fell.

But before the walls fell, Joshua fell upon his face.

While the walls still stood, Israel walked in obedience.

When judgment came, Rahab rested beneath a promise.

And after the victory, Achan discovered that no wall outside us is as dangerous as rebellion within us.

The message of Jericho is not that you can shout loudly enough to make every problem disappear.

The message is that God is God.

He commands.

He promises.

He judges.

He saves.

And He keeps every word that He has spoken.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Fall before the Lord.

Trust what He has said.

Obey what He has commanded.

And take refuge in Jesus Christ.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTORS COMMENTARY

THE WALLS OF JERICHO

Before the Walls Fell

Joshua 5:13 through Joshua 6:27

Surrender obedience judgment and mercy at Jericho

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION: The fall of Jericho reveals divine authority, faithful promise, holy judgment and saving mercy. Joshua first submitted to the Captain of the Lord's host. Israel then followed God's unusual command. The wall fell by God's power after obedient faith had completed its appointed course. Rahab received mercy because she believed the God her city resisted. Achan later showed that disobedience inside Israel posed a greater danger than fortification outside it.

The passage does not establish a method for making every personal obstacle disappear. Joshua possessed a direct promise concerning a particular city. Christians should apply his posture of surrender and his obedience to revealed truth without claiming his unique military instructions as a universal formula.

1 Joshua 5:1

The kings west of Jordan heard that the Lord had dried the river before Israel. Their hearts melted and "neither was there spirit in them any more." Jericho's fear therefore preceded Israel's march. The inhabitants did not first learn of Israel when trumpets sounded outside the wall. They knew that an extraordinary people had crossed an impassable river through the action of their God.

The verse prepares a contrast. Canaan's leaders lost courage because of what the Lord had done, while Joshua would be told to remain courageous because the Lord was with him. The decisive fact on both sides was God's presence.

2 Joshua 5:2-9

God commanded Joshua to circumcise the wilderness generation. Those born during the journey had not received the covenant sign. Before Israel conducted the campaign, covenant obedience had to be restored.

Circumcision left the men unable to fight until they healed. From ordinary military reasoning, this was an inconvenient and dangerous delay. From the narrative's theological perspective, obedience to God supplied greater security than uninterrupted readiness for battle.

The Lord said that He had rolled away "the reproach of Egypt," and the place was called Gilgal. Interpretations of the reproach differ. It may involve the shame of former slavery, Egyptian mockery that God had brought Israel out to destroy it or the covenant irregularity of the

wilderness generation. The central point is that God marked a changed status as Israel entered the land.

Christian application should preserve the covenant distinction. The text does not promise success after a modern ritual. It establishes that God's people cannot treat holiness and covenant faithfulness as optional preliminaries to practical work.

3 Joshua 5:10-12

Israel kept Passover on the plains of Jericho. The nation prepared for its first major battle by remembering its first great deliverance. Passover declared that Israel lived because God had acted in grace. Their future in Canaan depended upon the same God who had brought them out of Egypt.

The manna ceased after the people ate the produce of the land. The end of a familiar miracle did not mean that divine provision had ended. God supplied food through the land He had given. The means changed while the Provider remained faithful.

These verses create the order summarized in the sermon as "Consecration came before conquest. Worship came before warfare." The statement describes the narrative sequence. It should not be converted into a guarantee that a particular devotional routine will cause every venture to prosper.

4 Joshua 5:13

Joshua was "by Jericho" when he lifted his eyes and saw a man with a drawn sword. The text does not disclose Joshua's private thoughts. He may have been surveying the city, praying or walking. Responsible exposition should not present any reconstruction as fact.

The drawn sword signals authority and readiness for conflict or judgment. Comparable images appear in Numbers 22:23 and 1 Chronicles 21:16. Joshua was armed with responsibility for Israel, but he met One whose authority exceeded his own.

Joshua asked, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The question is direct and appropriate for a military leader encountering an armed stranger. It also reveals the frame within which Joshua was thinking. He saw Israel and Jericho as the available sides and asked the stranger to identify His allegiance.

5 Joshua 5:14

The answer begins, "Nay." This does not mean that the Lord was neutral concerning the conquest. God had promised the land and would shortly say that Jericho had been given to Joshua. The answer corrects the assumption that God's role is to enlist under a human cause.

The speaker identifies Himself as "captain of the host of the LORD." The Hebrew word *sar* can refer to a prince, chief or commander. *Tsava* refers to a host or army. Joshua commanded Israel under the supreme authority of this Captain.

Joshua "fell on his face to the earth, and did worship." The Hebrew verb can describe worship of God or prostration before a superior. The action alone does not settle the figure's identity. The holy-ground command in the following verse and the close parallel with Exodus 3 strengthen the conclusion that Joshua encountered a divine manifestation.

Many Christian interpreters identify the Captain as the preincarnate Christ. The eternal Son's role in revealing God makes that conclusion theologically reasonable. The text itself does not use the name Jesus, so a commentary should distinguish strong theological inference from an explicit identification.

Joshua's next question is the turning point: "What saith my lord unto his servant?" He moved from asking the Captain's alignment to declaring his own submission. Before Joshua heard how to address Jericho, he acknowledged that he was a servant.

This provides the study's central pastoral movement. Believers often ask God to support an existing preference. Joshua learned first to ask what his Lord had said. Submission preceded explanation.

6 Joshua 5:15

The Captain commanded Joshua to remove his shoe because the place was holy. The wording recalls God's command to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:5. Holiness belonged to the place because of God's presence, not because the soil possessed an independent sacred quality.

The verse ends, "And Joshua did so." The short statement anticipates the obedience of chapter 6. Joshua did not debate the command or request proof of the ground's holiness. He responded to the authority of the speaker.

The chapter division can hide the narrative connection. Ancient Hebrew manuscripts did not carry the modern chapter numbering. Joshua 6 continues the encounter by moving into the Lord's

instructions concerning Jericho. Preaching should keep Joshua 5:13-15 attached to the fall of the city.

7 Joshua 6:1

Jericho was "straitly shut up." The Hebrew uses an emphatic form of the verb meaning to shut or close. Ordinary movement through the gates had stopped. Fear of Israel had caused the city to depend entirely upon its fortifications.

"None went out, and none came in" explains the degree of closure. The verse presents the human fact before the divine promise. To Joshua's eyes, the defensive barrier was complete. To the Lord, the outcome was already settled.

8 Joshua 6:2

The Lord said, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." The Hebrew verb from *natan*, to give, is expressed as a completed action. God's declaration treats the promised gift as certain before Israel possesses it.

The command "See" asks Joshua to regard the situation through God's word rather than through the closed gate. It does not require denial of the wall. Faith sees the wall accurately and then gives greater weight to the promise of the One who speaks.

The verse cannot be generalized into a method of declaring every desired outcome as already obtained. The certainty came from God's direct speech. Faith receives a divine promise. Presumption invents a promise and attaches God's name to it.

9 Joshua 6:3-5

All the men of war were to circle the city once each day for six days. Seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns would precede the Ark. On the seventh day, the company would circle seven times. A long trumpet blast and collective shout would precede the wall's collapse.

The plan resembles a religious procession more than ordinary siegecraft. Priests, ritual horns, the repeated seven and the Ark dominate the description. Armed men participated, but military force could not explain the promised structural failure.

Seven often signals completeness and divinely ordered time in Scripture. The text emphasizes seven without assigning an independent mystical power to the number. No doctrine should be built upon thirteen total circuits or another calculation the author does not interpret.

The KJV phrase "trumpets of rams' horns" represents Hebrew terms associated with the shofar and yobel. These were horns used for signal and ceremony. The sound did not produce a natural frequency capable of demolishing masonry. God promised the fall.

The wall would "fall down flat," followed by each man going up straight before him. The underlying phrase may carry the sense of falling under itself or in its place. It describes effective collapse. It does not by grammar alone establish the precise direction of every brick.

10 Joshua 6:6-7

Joshua called the priests and relayed the command. The Ark again stands near the center of the instructions. Joshua's leadership consisted in receiving God's word faithfully and communicating it clearly.

The armed men were told to pass on before the Ark. Israel did not become passive simply because the victory belonged to God. Divine sovereignty ordered human responsibility. The people could not make the wall fall, but they could refuse or fulfill the command to march.

11 Joshua 6:8-9

The priests blew the trumpets while the armed men moved before them and the rear guard followed the Ark. Repetition of "before the LORD" identifies the procession as action under divine observation and authority.

The Ark should not be treated as a magical object. First Samuel 4 later records Israel carrying the Ark into battle while living in disobedience and suffering defeat. At Jericho, the object did not replace obedience. It represented the covenant presence of the God whose command Israel followed.

12 Joshua 6:10

Joshua prohibited shouting, audible speech and any word from the people until the appointed command. The text does not state why. Discipline, prevention of taunting or complaint, attention to the trumpet sound and dramatic contrast with the final shout have all been proposed.

A preacher may discuss these possibilities but should not say that a single doubtful statement would have prevented the miracle. That claim would transfer confidence from God's faithfulness to faultless human performance. The revealed point is that silence formed part of the command and Israel observed it.

The verse also cautions against equating faith with continuous verbal assertion. There was a God-appointed time for silence and a God-appointed time to shout. Neither silence nor shouting possessed power apart from obedience to the Lord's direction.

13 Joshua 6:11-14

After the first circuit, the company returned to camp and lodged there. The second day followed the same pattern. The narrator summarizes days three through six with "thus they did six days."

No progressive collapse is recorded. The wall appears unchanged while obedience continues. The lack of visible progress creates an appropriate pastoral connection for believers who perform revealed duties without immediate results.

The application must stay within Biblical boundaries. Israel held a specific promise that the wall would fall. A Christian praying for healing, employment or reconciliation may possess Biblical commands concerning prayer, honesty, forgiveness and hope without possessing a promise of a particular earthly result. Continued obedience is required. A Jericho-like outcome is not guaranteed.

The people did not receive a new plan each morning. They acted upon the word already delivered. This supports patient faithfulness and warns against the restless demand for constant novelty in Christian living.

14 Joshua 6:15-16

On the seventh day Israel rose early and circled the city seven times. The final day required greater exertion and the same disciplined submission. Even after six circuits that morning, the text records no change.

At the seventh circuit Joshua commanded, "Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city." The reason for the shout was the Lord's gift. Joshua did not tell Israel to shout in order to persuade God. Their cry answered His promise.

The sequence matters for doctrine and application: God promised, Israel believed, Israel obeyed and God acted. Human action was necessary because God commanded it, but human action was never sufficient to produce the result naturally.

15 Joshua 6:17-19

The city was described as "accursed" to the Lord. The Hebrew concept *herem* refers to what is devoted and removed from ordinary use. Destruction was one expression of that devotion. Silver, gold, brass and iron entered the Lord's treasury rather than becoming private spoil.

Rahab and those with her were explicitly excepted because she had hidden the messengers. Her action did not purchase divine favor. It demonstrated the faith confessed in Joshua 2 and honored the oath given by Israel's representatives.

Israel received a direct warning that taking devoted material would make the camp accursed and trouble it. Joshua 7 shows that the warning was neither ceremonial language nor an empty threat.

Jericho's status also prevented Israel from turning judgment into personal enrichment. The victory was God's gift and the city's valuable materials belonged to His treasury.

16 Joshua 6:20

The people shouted when they heard the trumpet. The wall fell and the soldiers went directly into the city. The concise description credits no weapon, engineer or human strength with the collapse.

Hebrews 11:30 later states, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Faith belongs to Israel's response. Power belongs to God. Faith is not an invisible physical energy. It is reliance upon God's trustworthiness that governs action.

Some archaeological writers argue that collapsed mudbrick at Tell es-Sultan formed a ramp against a stone retaining wall, matching the statement that the men "went up." The physical correspondence is interesting. The date and identification of that destruction layer remain disputed, so archaeology should be presented as supporting discussion rather than final proof.

17 Joshua 6:21

The verse records comprehensive destruction. Modern readers properly feel the moral weight of the language. A sermon that celebrates the wall while omitting those behind it fails to teach the whole passage.

Genesis 15:16 provides essential background. God delayed Abraham's descendants because Amorite iniquity was "not yet full." Leviticus 18 describes practices that defiled the land.

Deuteronomy 9 denies that Israel received the land because of its own righteousness. The conquest was judgment after patience, not racial superiority.

The same God later judged Israel for persistent covenant rebellion and removed it from the land. Divine judgment was not based upon ethnic favoritism. Rahab's rescue within this very chapter reinforces that conclusion.

God's authority as Creator and Judge cannot be transferred to private individuals, churches or modern nations. Israel acted under a direct command within a distinct stage of redemptive history. The New Testament church is commissioned to preach Christ and make disciples, not to seize territory in God's name.

18 Joshua 6:22-23

Joshua sent the two spies who had entered the land to bring Rahab and all connected with her out of the house. The men who made the promise participated in its fulfillment. The large-scale destruction did not cause the individual promise to be forgotten.

Rahab's family had to be gathered in the designated house. The spies' oath placed responsibility upon Rahab to bring them there and upon the family to remain within. This provides a natural evangelistic illustration, though each later Christian listener must respond personally to Christ rather than rely upon a relative's faith.

Those rescued were initially placed outside the camp. This likely reflects transition from a Canaanite environment and concerns of ritual cleanness. Verse 25 completes the movement by saying Rahab dwelt in Israel.

19 Joshua 6:24-25

Israel burned the city and placed the metals in the treasury. Fire both completed the judgment and prevented ordinary occupation of the captured city.

Joshua "saved Rahab the harlot alive." Scripture continues to use the description of her former life when recalling the reach of grace. The description does not mean she continued in prostitution. Hebrews and James likewise identify her so readers will remember whom God received.

Joshua 2:15 says Rahab's house was upon the wall. Joshua 6 says the wall fell and Rahab was brought out. The text requires preservation amid collapse but does not reveal the engineering details. Statements about the exact surviving section should be labeled as reconstruction.

Matthew 1:5 includes Rahab in the genealogy leading to David and Jesus Christ. Grace did more than remove her from danger. It joined an outsider to God's covenant people and placed her within the Messianic line.

Rahab therefore supplies the clearest Gospel direction in the narrative. A sinner in a condemned city heard, believed, acted and received mercy. The Christian proclamation then moves directly to Christ's death and resurrection as the revealed basis upon which God saves sinners.

20 Joshua 6:26

Joshua pronounced a curse upon the man who would rise to rebuild Jericho. The wording moves from foundation to gates and associates the work with the loss of firstborn and youngest sons. Foundation and gates likely describe reconstruction as a fortified city rather than any human residence in the broader locality.

The warning declared that Jericho's military restoration would defy what God had judged. It also established a word whose later fulfillment would confirm the continuing authority of divine revelation.

21 Joshua 6:27

The chapter concludes, "So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country." Joshua became known, but the cause was the Lord's presence. The verse prevents personality-centered interpretation. Joshua's authority was derivative.

The opening encounter and closing reputation form a meaningful frame. Joshua began on his face before the Captain. He ended widely honored because the Lord was with him. Submission to God, rather than pursuit of fame, preceded the influence he received.

22 First Kings 16:34

During Ahab's reign, Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. The text says he laid the foundation in Abiram his firstborn and set up the gates in Segub his youngest, "according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

The narrator explicitly identifies fulfillment. The interval between Joshua and Hiel did not weaken the word. Delay should not be confused with expiration.

Some have proposed that Hiel practiced foundation sacrifice. The verse does not state the mechanism and emphasizes the curse. It is safest to say that the rebuilding cost his sons according to God's word without asserting how they died.

23 Joshua 7:1

Joshua 7 opens by attributing trespass to "the children of Israel" and then naming Achan. The corporate language reflects Israel's covenant unity, while the identification of Achan preserves personal responsibility.

Achan took from what was devoted. The problem was not merely that he failed to share spoil. He seized what God had prohibited and brought the devoted object into Israel's camp.

24 Joshua 7:2-5

Spies assessed Ai and recommended a small force because the population appeared limited. Israel acted with confidence derived from human assessment and recent victory. The text does not record consultation with the Lord before the attempt.

Ai defeated Israel and approximately thirty-six men died. The people's hearts melted, using language similar to Canaanite fear. Israel had crossed the Jordan and defeated Jericho, yet past blessing could not substitute for present faithfulness.

25 Joshua 7:6-13

Joshua fell on his face again, but the context differed sharply from Joshua 5. In chapter 5, prostration expressed worship before the Commander. In chapter 7, Joshua mourned defeat and asked why God had brought Israel over Jordan.

The Lord told Joshua to rise because Israel had sinned. Prayer was appropriate, but the revealed need was now action against covenant violation. Spiritual posture cannot replace obedience when God has made the required response clear.

This does not mean that every unanswered prayer conceals an Achan. Scripture itself explains Ai's defeat. Without such revelation, believers should avoid assigning secret guilt to suffering people.

26 Joshua 7:19-21

Achan confessed that he saw a Babylonish garment, silver and gold, coveted them, took them and hid them. The progression from sight to desire to action to concealment resembles the inward course of temptation described elsewhere in Scripture.

The objects lay beneath his tent while Israel stood before an external enemy. The narrative supports the sermon statement that the wall outside the camp was less dangerous than disobedience within it.

Rahab and Achan create a striking canonical contrast. Rahab was a Canaanite outside Israel who believed and entered the people of God. Achan was an Israelite within the camp who rejected a clear command and came under judgment. Covenant proximity without faithfulness did not save him.

27 Hebrews 11:30-31

Hebrews places the people of Israel and Rahab next to one another. Verse 30 presents corporate faith outside the walls. Verse 31 presents individual faith inside the walls. Both responses rested upon what had been heard from God.

The KJV says Rahab did not perish "with them that believed not." The underlying term carries the sense of disobedience as well as unbelief. In Biblical thought, refusal to trust God and refusal to obey Him are closely related.

Hebrews 11 later recounts believers who experienced deliverance and believers who suffered without earthly rescue. Jericho must therefore not be used to promise that faith always produces a visible earthly victory. Faith remains faithful to God in either outcome.

28 James 2:25

James asks whether Rahab was "justified by works" when she received the messengers and sent them out another way. His argument opposes an empty profession that produces no action. Rahab's conduct vindicated the reality of her faith.

Paul's teaching that sinners are justified by faith apart from works addresses the basis of acceptance with God. James addresses the evidence of genuine faith before observers. Rahab did not earn grace through moral achievement. She acted because she believed Israel's God.

29 The Scarlet Cord

The scarlet cord was the agreed sign identifying Rahab's house. Its color naturally lends itself to Christian imagery involving sacrificial blood. Historic preaching has often connected it with Passover and the cross.

The connection should remain illustrative because no inspired writer supplies that interpretation. The commentary can say that the cord reminds Christians of salvation through Christ's blood. It should not say that Scripture proves the cord was designed as a prophecy of the crucifixion.

The strongest textual point is simpler. Rahab displayed the sign because she trusted the promise. Her visible action corresponded to her confessed faith.

30 Archaeological Commentary

Tell es-Sultan contains remains from many occupation periods. John Garstang associated a major burned destruction with Joshua and dated it near 1400 BC. Kathleen Kenyon later dated the principal destruction of fortified City IV near 1550 BC. Bryant Wood challenged Kenyon's use of pottery evidence and argued again for a date near 1400 BC.

Radiocarbon tests on short-lived cereal samples have generally supported a date earlier than Wood's proposal. Debate continues over pottery, stratigraphy, scarabs, erosion and the relationship of samples to occupational phases.

Collapsed mudbrick at the base of a retaining wall, burning and stored grain are significant points of correspondence with a suddenly destroyed city. They do not independently identify Joshua as the conqueror or establish the exact year.

The proper commentary conclusion is neither dismissal nor overstatement. Archaeology illuminates the kind of fortified settlement described and offers compatible remains. The chronological identification remains contested.

31 Major Theological Conclusions

God's authority precedes Joshua's activity. Joshua was a servant before he was a successful commander.

God's promise precedes Israel's obedience. The people did not create the promise through marching.

Israel's obedience precedes the visible result. Faith continued while the wall remained unchanged.

God's power produced the decisive collapse. Human participation did not diminish divine causation.

God's holiness explains both Joshua's worship and Jericho's judgment. The drawn sword and holy ground belong to the same encounter.

God's mercy rescued Rahab without denying His judgment upon Jericho. Judgment and mercy appear together rather than canceling one another.

God's impartiality appears in Rahab and Achan. A believing Canaanite received mercy, while a disobedient Israelite received judgment.

32 Pastoral Application and Guardrails

A believer should ask what God has actually said before claiming that an obstacle will fall. Scripture clearly commands truthfulness, forgiveness, prayer, sexual purity, generosity, love and faithful witness. Obedience in these areas does not require a private sign.

A believer may ask God to change a difficult circumstance while submitting the outcome to His wisdom. Jericho does not promise that every illness will be healed, every relationship restored or every financial need met in the desired manner.

A church may learn that God's presence matters more than technique. This does not excuse poor preparation. Joshua organized the procession precisely. It means organization serves obedience and cannot replace dependence upon God.

A person waiting without visible progress should not interpret delay as proof that obedience is useless. The proper question is whether the course is truly commanded by Scripture. If it is, faithfulness remains right even before results appear.

A person focused upon an external enemy should examine the heart without assuming guilt for every hardship. Achan warns against concealed disobedience. Job warns against simplistic explanations of suffering. Both truths must remain together.

33 Gospel Conclusion

Rahab lived within a city under judgment and possessed no power to preserve it. She heard of the Lord, confessed His sovereignty and relied upon the promised means of rescue. Her past and nationality did not place her beyond mercy.

The Gospel provides a clearer and greater refuge. All have sinned. Jesus Christ died for sins, was buried and rose again. Salvation rests upon His completed work rather than upon moral respectability, religious heritage or a human defense against judgment.

The sermon may invite hearers to repent and believe without implying that a prayer is a magical formula. Jesus saves the sinner who comes to Him in faith. Rahab's reception into Israel and place in Christ's genealogy assure the repentant outsider that grace can give a new identity and future.

The final word of Jericho is therefore the faithfulness of God. He kept His promise to give the city. He honored the promise made to Rahab. He enforced His warning concerning devoted things. He fulfilled Joshua's word in the days of Hiel. The appropriate response is surrender, faith, obedience and refuge in Jesus Christ.