

Victory at Jericho

Passages: Josh 5–6

Memory Verse

“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 Corinthians 10:4–5)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God wanted what was best for His nation.2. His plans for the good of the Israelites required their faith and obedience.3. God’s deliverance is different from man’s expectations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is almighty.2. God’s thoughts are higher than our own.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make God the Commander in our lives.2. Tear down any strongholds that keep us apart from Him.3. Learn full obedience by giving to God and putting Him first.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Jericho
- B. The Commander of the Army of the Lord
- C. Marching Around Jericho
- D. The Destruction of Jericho

Life Application

1. Who Is the Commander in Your Life?
2. Tearing Down Walls
3. Giving to God and Putting Him First

Memory Verse

Conclusion: God’s abidance allowed the Israelites to have success. In much the same way, we must make God the Commander in our own lives.

Spiritual Teachings

A. Jericho

After entering the promised land, Joshua and the Israelites approached the first city that God wanted them to defeat: Jericho, a city located just north of the Dead Sea. The area around it was fertile, and it was also known as “the city of palm trees” (Deut 34:3). We may have heard that Jericho was a well-fortified city. But its history and significance are much greater than that. Let’s read a little bit about the city¹:

Scholars have classified Jericho as one of the oldest cities in the world. By the time Joshua sent the spies, it had a ruler, an army, and strong fortifications, suggesting a certain level of sophistication and prosperity. So the city would clearly have had many more inhabitants apart from Rahab. Many would have been richer and of higher status than she.

From what scholars have discovered, it is apparent that Jericho was a significant city in its time. It was a mighty city, well known across Canaan. Yet despite its fortifications, fame, and development, God chose Jericho to be the first city that He would destroy through His chosen nation.

Physically, Jericho may have been an ideal city to live in. However, the Bible tells us that Canaan was spiritually lost. Their religious practices were perverse and abominable in God’s eyes. The laws in Leviticus give us some idea of pagan practices that existed at the time, including extreme sexual immorality, and the sacrifice of children (Lev 19:20–24; 18:21). Their sins were so great that the land itself was defiled (Lev 18:25). God had given them time to repent, but they had not changed. So, as God had judged Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25), it was now time to cast His judgment on Jericho.

B. The Commander of the Army of the Lord

The Israelites were ready to face their enemies for the first time, but before they headed for Jericho, God appeared before Joshua. Let’s read Joshua 5:13–15. When God gave the Israelites the Mosaic laws, He also told them that He would “send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared” (Ex 23:20). As long as the Israelites obeyed this Angel’s voice, God promised that He would be “an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries” (v. 22). This Angel would clear the way into Canaan for the Israelites. For their part, the Israelites “shall not bow down to [the Canaanite] gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works” (v. 24).

The nation of Israel had already witnessed the destruction of the Egyptian gods throughout the ten plagues. After only three plagues, the Egyptian magicians confessed to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex 8:19). God would now demonstrate His power over the Canaanite gods as well. Moses had already taught the Israelites that for any who diligently obey the voice of the Lord, He will “cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways” (Deut 28:7). Victory was already promised to them before they even entered Canaan! This is the power of the Commander of the Lord’s Army who stood before Joshua.

1. Joshua’s reaction

Joshua’s reaction to the Commander of the Lord’s army is very similar to Moses’ reaction to the burning bush (Ex 3:4–5). From this, we can infer that the “Commander of the army of the LORD” is actually God Himself. As with Moses, God commanded Joshua to remove his sandals because

¹ Caleb Lee, “Conquest of Canaan – Jericho (I)”, *Manna Magazine* 74 (2014): 15, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://tjc.org/elib-single-item-display/?langid=1&itemid=30573&type=pub>.

the place where he stood was holy (cf. Ex 3:5). From this passage, we can see three key aspects of our servitude:

- a. **God is our Commander:** Although Joshua was the leader and commander of Israel, before God, Joshua addressed himself as a “servant.”
- b. **Holiness is key:** The very first command God gave to Joshua was to remove his sandals. To serve God, it is not our skill, ability, or intelligence, but sanctification that comes first and foremost.
- c. **A humble and obedient heart:** Joshua did not argue the point or assert his position. When commanded, he promptly removed his sandals, then asked God what to do.

2. God’s promise and reassurance

As one of the most fortified cities in the region, Jericho was a strange choice for the Israelites’ first attack. This may have made the Israelites nervous before the battle. On the other hand, it may also have made the Canaanites incredibly fearful. As a result, Jericho was “securely shut up” because of the Israelites’ approach. Let’s read Joshua 6:1–5. Despite Jericho’s military strength, God told Joshua, “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor” (v. 2). The city was already set to fall, and its people’s defeat was already ordained by God. After hearing of God’s work in Egypt, Rahab chose to submit to God, while her neighbors chose to resist. How do you think Joshua felt after hearing that their victory was already assured? He probably felt great reassurance and strength in God’s protection.

Although God’s instructions seem odd in our eyes, Joshua did not question them. He trusted in God’s almighty power and understood that his role was to faithfully follow the orders of the Commander. In the same way, we may not always understand God’s will, but we still need to faithfully follow what He has instructed us to do. This is how we can demonstrate our trust in the Lord. When we do, as He promised to Joshua, our enemies will already have been handed over to us!

C. Marching Around Jericho

After his meeting with the Commander of the Lord’s army, Joshua faithfully passed on God’s instructions to the priests and the Israelites. Can you imagine marching around the walls of a city in complete silence for several days while its inhabitants watch? This may have felt foolish, confusing, or even embarrassing, but the Israelites’ obedience to God’s command was crucial to their victory.

1. The Israelites acted with faith

It wasn’t exciting for the Israelites to walk around the city day after day in silence, and they may have experienced derision for it. Yet they were faithful to God’s instruction. Why was silence so important? There are two possible reasons: so that they could hear God’s signal, and as a test of their faith.² The trumpets told the Israelites what they were to do, but they could only obey if they could hear them. In order to hear God’s command, the Israelites first had to quiet themselves. However, as they circled the city again and again, we can only imagine that the people of Jericho would have begun to insult or mock them when nothing happened for six days. On the seventh day, the Israelites had to endure this same situation in complete silence as they circled the city seven times.

We should remember that no matter what God wants us to do, we should follow His

² Caleb Lee, “Conquest of Canaan – Jericho (II)”, *Manna Magazine* 75 (2015): 16, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://tjc.org/elib-single-item-display/?langid=1&itemid=31106&type=pub>.

instructions while patiently waiting on His will. When we continually choose to trust in God's power, He will work miracles in our lives. The Israelites were unified in this decision. As a result, "[by] faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days" (Heb 11:30).

2. **The Israelites acted with persistent obedience**

God instructed them to have seven priests and seven trumpets, and to march around the city for seven days. Today when we study the Bible, we know that the number "seven" represents completion and perfection in Scripture, but it may have seemed a strange number to Joshua or the Israelites. In fact, everything they did was nonsensical in the eyes of man—who would ever imagine that an entire city would be destroyed after marching around it for seven days? Despite this, they did not change God's command, and none complained or murmured against Him.

If the Israelites had given up on the sixth day, they would not have witnessed the destruction of the city. We tend to cut corners or make excuses for ourselves by saying that we are just disobeying this one time. However, if we say we obey God, then we need to always obey God fully. We cannot just obey Him on the Sabbath and then disobey the rest of the week! Therefore, it is important to train ourselves to obey God fully without cutting corners and to obey Him consistently, each and every day. If we do, then just as the Israelites witnessed the destruction of Jericho's walls, we will experience God's power in our lives.

Joshua and the Israelites believed that God was the only one who could open the way for them. God is also able to help us overcome difficulties that seem impossible to handle. Just as God made the walls of Jericho fall, He can help us in situations where we may feel helpless. With God, nothing is impossible. However, like the Israelites, we must be willing to fully follow His commands daily and have faith in His will, even though it may seem counterintuitive or boring. For example, we may find our daily practice of prayer or Bible-reading habitual rather than edifying, and our weekly services boring instead of restful. But when we have the heart to do according to God's instruction each and every day, He will help us to overcome any walls in our lives.

D. The Destruction of Jericho

God told Joshua, "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor" (Josh 6:2). Their victory was already assured! However, this victory was entirely dependent on the Israelites' obedience to God (Heb 11:30). Let's read Joshua 6:21–27.

1. **Victory from God**

We have probably been to a city of some sort before—can you imagine an entire city crumbling down in a moment? This is what the Israelites experienced! Let's read Deuteronomy 28:9–14. God has repeatedly told His people that obedience to Him will bring forth blessings. A clear example of this blessing can be seen in God's faithful preservation of Rahab and her family.

On the other hand, those who disobey God will be cursed (Deut 28:15–19). Let's read Deuteronomy 9:5. Many who read the Bible believe that God was unreasonable or harsh towards the Canaanites. He repeatedly commanded the Israelites to completely destroy their enemies. But our God is not only merciful, but He is also righteous; He is a God who judges us for our sins. We learned at the beginning of today's lesson that the Canaanites had many evil practices. Even scholars of today acknowledge that their religious practices were among the most perverse recorded in history. As a result, God used His people to enact His judgment upon

the Canaanites, and at the same time, gave the Israelites victory because of their obedience.

2. Acknowledging God's victory

God instructed the Israelites to destroy the city and all within it. Only Rahab and her family were spared, while everything else was burned. However, all the silver, gold, and bronze and iron vessels were to be taken for the treasury of God. Jericho was a mighty city and would have been full of many valuables. It was also the very first city that God conquered for the Israelites. But there was a valuable lesson for them to learn: the firstfruits must go to God. This was an act of acknowledgement that all things come from God. Their victory over Jericho came from God, so it was only appropriate that the valuables be consecrated and added to the Lord's treasury.

After the battle of Jericho, the Canaanites became even more afraid of the Israelites. The Bible records how God was with Joshua, and that his fame spread throughout the land (Josh 6:27). These two statements are closely related; God's abidance and might allowed the Israelites to have this great success. Winning this battle also greatly encouraged them. It was only the first of many to come, yet God gave them such an overwhelming victory through their trust and obedience in Him.

Check for Understanding

1. **Why was Jericho a strange city for the Israelites to attack first?** It was not only a well-fortified city with an army, but it was also one of the oldest cities in the world and likely very sophisticated and prosperous.
2. **How did Joshua react to meeting the Commander of the Lord's army?** Despite being the leader and commander of Israel, he addressed himself as a "servant" and promptly removed his sandals to show his obedience and reverence to God's holiness.
3. **What two characteristics of their actions were crucial for the Israelites' victory?** They acted with faith, and they acted with full obedience to God's commands.
4. **Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites?** God was using the Israelites to enact His judgment upon the Canaanites, who had many evil practices and refused to repent despite the time that God had given to them.
5. **What did God command the Israelites to do with the valuables of Jericho, and why is this important?** He commanded them to take them for the treasury of God, and not for themselves. They had to learn that the firstfruits must go to God. It was an act of acknowledgement that all things come from God.

Life Application

1. Who Is the Commander in Your Life?

Let's re-read Joshua 5:14–15; 6:6–7. Joshua did not hesitate to worship God, nor did he question God's peculiar instructions. Jesus Christ taught us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (Jn 14:15). We need to be "doers" of God's word, and not "hearers" only (Jas 1:22). If God appears before us, will we be hearers only, or will we be able to bring every thought in captivity to Jesus Christ? Are there ever times we try to "bargain" with God's will, or perhaps try to pretend that what we do is okay when we know that it isn't?

- Take a moment to consider times when you have conveniently forgotten God's will, or only obeyed it partially for your own convenience. *(Allow students to brainstorm. Examples may be: skipping Sabbath service to go to a friend's birthday party; obeying our parents only when it is convenient for us; lying to hide something from our family or friends; etc.)*

It is often difficult for us to fully follow God's commands instead of succumbing to our personal desires. Paul often compared our life of faith to a fight or war that we need to persist in. To compete in a race, we need to exert self-control over our body to train ourselves and to continue running. As a soldier of Christ, we need to arm ourselves so that we do not fall to sin. In both cases, the most important thing is that we follow the orders of our overseer and commander, our Father in heaven. But like any race or competition, if we try to bend or break the rules, we will be disqualified.

To avoid this, we need to train ourselves to faithfully follow God's commands. If Joshua or the Israelites had decided to skip a day or change God's instructions, they likely would not have seen the miracle of Jericho's walls collapsing. Let's read today's memory verse, 2 Corinthians 10:4–5.

Discussion

- What is required for “pulling down strongholds? (*God's might*)
- What do you think is “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” in our daily lives? (*Ex: Human wisdom, personal understanding, or past experiences that may make us confident enough to act against God's will.*)
- What does it mean to “[bring] every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”? (Jn 14:15, 23; Jas 1:22; Josh 1:8; 1 Jn 5:3) (*Ex: It means learning to love God with all our heart and knowing God's will through study and prayer. When this becomes the case, we think of God in each and every decision that we make, and we are willing to follow His commands rather than try to bend them to suit our own desires.*)

Destroy the city, and do not let it be rebuilt

The Israelites' complete destruction of Jericho reminds us that once we have overcome our sinful ways, we need to completely remove sin from our lives. We cannot leave any remnants behind. Leaving these open doors behind are often the reason we fall back into our old ways. This is especially true for the things that we are addicted to. When we don't completely remove sin from our lives or separate ourselves from it, we leave room for ourselves to go back into sin. If the Israelites were to allow the Canaanites to dwell among them, they may be influenced and led away from God. They needed to remove anything that could possibly replace God as commander in their lives.

In addition, Joshua gave the command that Jericho never be rebuilt—any who did would be cursed (Josh 6:26). When we “rebuild Jericho,” we are returning to our old sins. Let's read Colossians 3:10. Instead of continuously repenting for the same sin committed repeatedly, we should instead put off the “old man,” and put on the “new” who is “renewed” each day. Though we may be unable to change by our own power, we can root ourselves in the knowledge of God and be transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit! In this way, we will not be ruled by sin, but will instead keep God as our Commander.

2. Tearing Down Walls

Just like the Israelites, there may be walls or obstacles that we need to tear down in order to be able to conquer our enemies. The walls in our hearts can range from anxieties to addictions, but they can be any sin that prevents us from living a life pleasing to God. Often these walls are difficult to overcome, and we are unable to obtain victory on our own. We are powerless by ourselves, so we need God's help to tear down these walls. Once we recognize God as the Commander in our lives, it is time for us to take action: we need to practice obedience to His word and tear down any strongholds that keep us separated from Him.

God's will can seem unexciting and even counterproductive to us. For example, by society's terms, it is more restful to have a day off than to go to church to fulfill our various responsibilities there. Wouldn't we logically find more rest on Sabbath day if we were to stay home and relax instead? But we need to remember that the things we do for God will never make us lose out on anything. We will never "lose" by following His commands. But this is much easier said than done! What steps can we take to begin tearing down any strongholds in our spiritual lives?

a. Discover strongholds and find motivation to remove the enemy!

In order to change, we must first find the desire and motivation within ourselves to change. If we feel like everything is going well, then we won't be compelled to try. This means that the first step is inspecting our own lives to discover any weaknesses that we have in our spiritual lives and finding any walls that are blocking us from drawing closer to God. What are they? Are they fear? Worries? Anxieties? Lack of trust? Once we have identified any strongholds, we can begin removing whatever causes us to stumble. This portion requires honesty with ourselves. Just as God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites, we need to determine to do the same. If we don't, then it is possible that we will return to whatever hindered our faith.

b. Root ourselves in the word of God

Once we have made the decision for ourselves, the next step is to follow God's instructions. We need to root ourselves in His word! In order to follow His commands, the Israelites first needed to know them. In the same way, we need to have a strong and thorough understanding of the Bible so that we can know our sins. Rooting ourselves in God's word will also give us a firm foundation for bringing down the walls that we face.

c. Deepen your communication and obedience towards God

If the Israelites had not obeyed God's instructions, they wouldn't have been able to witness the miracle of Jericho's destruction. Throughout the process of bringing down our walls, we need to constantly increase the time we spend with God, deepen our communication with Him, and practice greater obedience to Him. When we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, we will no longer be bound by the things of this world. When we fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit, we are filling ourselves with the love of God. As a result, we will naturally find that we "count all things loss" for Christ (Phil 3:8).

3. Giving to God and Putting Him First

When they attacked Jericho, God gave an additional instruction to the Israelites: they were not to take the gold, silver, and other valuables for themselves, but place them first into the treasury for God. God wanted the Israelites to give the loot from the first city to Him. Only later, after defeating the city of Ai, were the Israelites permitted to take any for themselves. It is clear where God wants our priorities to be. What do you value the most in your life? Aside from material things, you probably enjoy spending your time and energy on things that you like, such as your friends or your personal hobbies. Would you be willing to give these to God first?

As our all-powerful Creator, He does not need anything from us, but as our Father in heaven and Commander of our hearts, God wants us to learn to put Him first. Aside from offering tithe, we can train ourselves to prioritize God when it comes to how we spend our time, our effort, and our energy. As the Bible teaches us, "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established" (Prov 16:3; cf. Mt 6:31-33).

The Israelites experienced each portion of this verse at Jericho, in a very real sense: They witnessed God’s might pulling down a stronghold when they went against human wisdom and instead obediently followed the knowledge of God. We can also experience God’s might in our lives, but we need to first do as Joshua did when he met the Commander of the Lord’s army. When we learn to obey Him completely and tear down any strongholds that prevent us from focusing on Him, we have successfully made Him Commander of our hearts.

Memory Verse

“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 Corinthians 10:4–5)

Meaning

See Life Application #1.

Conclusion

The Israelites were able to experience the miracle of Jericho’s destruction because of their faith in His power and their full obedience. Without both, they would not have experienced victory. God’s abidance was what allowed them to have success. In much the same way, we must make God the Commander in our own lives—learn to prioritize Him, tear down any strongholds that interfere with our relationship with Him, and follow His commands with full obedience. When we do, He will help us to overcome any “Jerichos” that we may encounter in our lives!

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” in our daily lives?
Human wisdom, personal understanding, or past experiences that may make us confident enough to act against God’s will.
2. “Now it shall come to pass, if you _____ obey the _____ of the LORD your God, to _____ carefully all His _____ which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you _____ above all _____ of the earth.”
(Deuteronomy 28:1)
diligently, voice, observe, commandments, high, nations
3. What are two possible reasons the Israelites had to walk around the city in silence?
One was so that they could hear God’s signal. The other was to test their faith. In order to hear God’s command, they first had to quiet themselves.
4. God promised victory, but what two things did the Israelites need in order to experience this?
Their victory was entirely dependent on their faith and obedience to God.
5. Why do we sometimes fail to make God the Commander of our lives?
Because we fail to fully follow God’s commands and instead succumb to our personal desires.
6. What are “strongholds” in our lives? How do we tear them down?
Any obstacles or sin that prevent us from living a life pleasing to God. We are powerless on our own, so we need God’s help to tear down these walls.