



Session 2

CONQUEST

God gives His people victory when they trust Him and obey His commands.

JOSHUA 6:12-25

¹² Joshua got up early the next morning. The priests took the ark of the LORD, ¹³ and the seven priests carrying seven trumpets marched in front of the ark of the LORD. While the trumpets were blowing, the armed troops went in front of them, and the rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD. ¹⁴ On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. ¹⁵ Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and



Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.¹⁷ But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the men we sent.¹⁸ But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and bring disaster on it.¹⁹ For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and must go into the LORD’s treasury.”²⁰ So the people shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the people gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The people advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city.²¹ They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey.²² Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, “Go to the prostitute’s house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you promised her.”²³ So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.²⁴ They burned up the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD’s house.²⁵ However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father’s household, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she lives in Israel to this day.

Take note of the details included in the story, paying particular attention to numbers and specifications. What do these details reveal about the nature of obedience?

FIRST THOUGHTS

Have you ever thought about what it really means to believe something or someone? Some might say belief is essentially mental assent. That is, we merely agree something is true, and that's belief. For example, we may believe giraffes are tall. We may believe Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. We may choose to believe certain modern proverbs, such as "the early bird gets the worm." But what does it mean to truly believe?

Suppose your friend told you he really believes in his doctor. However, he never followed his doctor's counsel and never took any prescriptions the doctor prescribed. He did not have tests his doctor advised. You might wonder whether such a person really believes in his doctor.

How would you describe the relationship between faith and obedience? Can you have one without the other? Explain.

Biblical belief comprises more than mere mental assent; it includes trust. It includes a confidence to obey God. It means we are ready to act on a conviction, because we believe in the One who issued the command. If we truly believe in God, we will submit to His counsel and follow His commands. Anything less suggests we don't really believe in Him as much as we say.

Today's session focuses on Joshua's leading God's people against the city of Jericho. God's battle plan was unusual, but as Joshua and the people followed it, they saw God bring an astounding victory. The wall of Jericho fell, and the people took the city.

Israel's battle against Jericho should encourage believers today in the battles they face. God gives His people victory when they trust Him and obey His commands.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOSHUA 2:1–6:27

Joshua "secretly sent two men as spies ... saying, 'Go and scout the land, especially Jericho'" (2:1). In Jericho, the spies took refuge in the home of a prostitute named Rahab. The king of Jericho, when told



of the presence of the spies, commanded Rahab to surrender them. Instead, she hid the men on her roof and deliberately misled the king by informing him that the two men had escaped. Grateful, the spies promised to protect Rahab and her family when Joshua and the Israelites destroyed Jericho. The men instructed her to identify the location of her house by tying a scarlet cord to her window.

The two spies returned to Joshua and reported: “The LORD has handed over the entire land to us” (2:24). Starting early the following morning, Joshua led the Israelites to the Jordan River. The Lord instructed Joshua to charge the priests to stand in the river with the ark of the covenant. When the priests obeyed, “the water flowing downstream stood still” (3:16), and the Israelites crossed on dry ground (3:17). What sheer euphoria the Hebrews must have experienced to actually be in the promised land!

The Lord instructed Joshua to march around Jericho with his army for six days. Seven priests, each carrying a ram’s horn trumpet, would accompany the men (6:3-4). On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times. With one prolonged trumpet blast as a signal, the Hebrews were to shout. The Lord promised: “The city wall will collapse, and the people will advance” (6:5).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PATIENT OBEDIENCE (JOSH. 6:12-14)

VERSE 12

¹² Joshua got up early the next morning. The priests took the ark of the LORD,

Following God’s specific instructions (6:3-5), Joshua led the priests in marching around the city of Jericho, escorting ***the ark of the LORD***. Elsewhere, the writer referred to this same object as the “ark of the covenant” (3:3,6,8) and the “ark of the LORD’s covenant” (4:18). The ark of the covenant was a chest about four feet long, two and a half feet wide, and two and a half feet deep. It held the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. The ark was a visible reminder of God’s presence with His people.

On day one, the procession encircled the city of Jericho only once, as God commanded. The group returned to camp for the night (6:11).

The events of the second day are recounted in verses 12-13. Joshua **got up early the next morning**. This hints at eagerness. We read of no hesitation or reservation on Joshua's behalf. In obedience, he followed the leadership of the Lord.

VERSE 13

¹³ and the seven priests carrying seven trumpets marched in front of the ark of the LORD. While the trumpets were blowing, the armed troops went in front of them, and the rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD.

The seven priests each carried a trumpet, literally, a “shophar” (also spelled “shofar”). On other occasions, the Hebrews blew the shophars as a call to assemble. It also served to summon the Israelites in the event of war. Even now, shophars can be heard in Jerusalem on Friday afternoons, alerting Jews of the approaching Sabbath.

The number **seven** characterized perfection to the Hebrews (notice seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits of the wall). The **armed troops** (in front) and **rear guard** (behind) protected the priests.

VERSE 14

¹⁴ On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

Verse 14 summarizes the events of day two. **They marched around the city once**, as God had commanded (v. 3), and then **returned to the camp** at Gilgal. The note **they did this for six days** stresses the people's patient obedience to what God commanded.

No doubt, Joshua and the people would have thought the plan for taking Jericho was unusual. Yet they patiently obeyed nonetheless. Certainly it challenged their faith to adopt this particular strategy. However, obedience to God does not require a total understanding of His commands; it requires trust in God even when His entire purpose cannot be seen.

What potential disasters await believers who refuse to wait for God's plan and timing?



Does obedience always require patience? Explain.

FINAL PREPARATIONS (JOSH. 6:15-19)

VERSES 15-16

¹⁵ Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

In these verses the conquest began. ***Early on the seventh day*** the Hebrews made final preparations for conquering Jericho. They ***marched around the city seven times in the same way***, carefully obeying the instructions of the Lord (6:4). The words ***that was the only day they marched around the city seven times*** emphasizes the people’s complete obedience to every detail of God’s command.

After the seventh time, Joshua commanded the people: ***“Shout!”*** Prior to this final pass around Jericho, the people had been told to be silent. Joshua had instructed them: “Don’t let one word come out of your mouth until the time I say, ‘Shout!’ Then you are to shout” (6:10).

BIBLE SKILL: Study a Bible character.

Read these Bible passages: Joshua 2:8-11; 6:25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25. What do the verses reveal about Rahab? What words would you use to describe her life?

VERSE 17

¹⁷ But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the men we sent.

Joshua gave additional instruction that everything in the city would be **set apart to the LORD for destruction**. This commandment was not a new one; God had given it to Moses years before. In Deuteronomy 7:4, the Lord commanded Moses to destroy the people living in the promised land for fear the inhabitants would “turn your sons away from Me to worship other gods.” (See also Deut. 20:16-18.)

The inhabitants of Canaan were unspeakably wicked, and God did not want His holy people contaminated by them. His people needed to be pure and separate from pagan religion.

Joshua gave special instructions concerning Rahab. **Only •Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live**. As discussed in earlier (pp. 23-24), Rahab had shown kindness to the spies when she hid the men (Josh. 2:2-7). The spies promised to protect her and her family when the Israelites destroyed Jericho (2:14-21). Interestingly, Rahab would appear in the genealogies of both David and Jesus (Matt. 1:5,16). God not only spared Rahab’s life, He gave her a prominent place in the genealogy of Christ. No one’s life is beyond the touch of God’s grace if they are willing to repent and place their faith in Him.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Justification*

Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.

VERSES 18-19

¹⁸ But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and bring disaster on it.

¹⁹ For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and must go into the LORD’s treasury.”

Joshua gave a final warning regarding the material things inside Jericho. Wandering in the wilderness for 40 years had left the Israelites a poor people. The **silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron** would be a temptation to such a destitute nation. With a play on words in the original Hebrew, Joshua informed the people to keep themselves from **the things set apart** lest they be **set apart for destruction**.



Disobedience to this command would *bring disaster* on the Israelites. The Hebrew word translated *bring disaster* occurs twice in Joshua 7:25 (“troubled,” “trouble”), where it describes Achan, a man who disobeyed this command, kept some of Jericho’s treasure, and paid for it with his own life and the lives of his family (Josh. 7:1,16-26). God desires complete obedience from His people.

How is a warning also a promise? Can a promise also be a warning? Explain.

OBEDIENCE REWARDED (JOSH. 6:20-25)

VERSES 20-21

²⁰ So the people shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the people gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The people advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. ²¹ They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey.

In fulfillment of God’s command in 6:5, *the people shouted* as the priests blew their *trumpets*. The trumpet blast heralded the moment of God’s victory. We can only imagine the astonishment on the faces of the Hebrews as they watched the wall of Jericho, seemingly indestructible, collapse. If hesitation occurred at all, it evidently lasted only for a moment. *The people advanced into the city*. Israel’s conquest of Canaan had begun. Obeying the Lord’s command, the Hebrews *completely destroyed everything in the city*.

VERSES 22-23

²² Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, “Go to the prostitute’s house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you promised her.” ²³ So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

One amazing fact should not be lost in Jericho’s rubble. Previously, the writer of the Book of Joshua revealed the fact that Rahab

lived in a house built in the wall of the city (2:15). How easily Rahab and family could have been crushed as the wall collapsed. Visualize once more the Israelites as they watched Jericho's wall disintegrate. Now visualize them as they observed one particular section of the wall remain intact. The Lord rewarded Rahab. As Rahab protected the two spies, the Lord protected Rahab and her family.

VERSES 24-25

²⁴ They burned up the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. ²⁵ However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's household, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she lives in Israel to this day.

The Israelites ***burned up the city and everything in it***. Unable to destroy the silver, gold, iron, and bronze, they put it in ***the treasury of the LORD's house***. Once again, we are reminded that only Rahab and her family survived this initial battle in the promised land. And once again, her act of faithfulness was recorded—***she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho***. Some commentators have taken notice of the fact that almost as many words describe Rahab's deliverance as describe the conquest of the city. (In 6:17-25, 86 Hebrews words are used to describe Rahab's salvation, and 102 words are used to describe Jericho's destruction.)

New Testament writers commended Rahab for her faithfulness: "By faith Rahab the prostitute received the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed" (Heb. 11:31). "And in the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by a different route?" (Jas. 2:25). True faith is demonstrated by obedience, and God honors those who faithfully obey Him.

How does obedience demonstrate what we really believe? Can we have genuine belief or faith without obedience? Explain.

IN MY CONTEXT



- A believer demonstrates his or her obedience by trusting God.
- The Bible clearly reveals the fact that godly obedience will be rewarded while disobedience will be punished.
- God rewards obedience by providing those who obey Him a place of service in His kingdom.

Describe what God is specifically asking you to do with your life. What steps are you taking in preparation and out of obedience?

As a group, discuss potential shortcuts believers may be tempted to take when preparing to serve. Discuss how the group can help one another avoid these shortcuts.

Reflect on acts of obedience you have done that opened new opportunities of service for you. Thank God for those opportunities and for His faithfulness.

MEMORY VERSE

This is so that all the people of the earth may know that the LORD's hand is mighty, and so that you may always fear the LORD your God.
—Joshua 4:24