

Taking Jericho

Joshua 6-7

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. ² But the LORD said to Joshua, “I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. ³ You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. ⁴ Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram’s horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. ⁵ When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams’ horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town.”

⁶ So Joshua called together the priests and *gave them God’s instructions...*

⁸ After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams’ horns started marching in the presence of the LORD, blowing the horns as they marched. And the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant followed behind them. ⁹ Some of the armed men marched in front of the priests with the horns and some behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. ¹⁰ “Do not shout; do not even talk,” Joshua commanded. “Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!” ¹¹ So the Ark of the LORD was carried around the town once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp...

¹⁴ On the second day they again marched around the town once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. ¹⁶ The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the town! ¹⁷ Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

¹⁸ “Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. ¹⁹ Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury.”

²⁰ When the people heard the sound of the rams’ horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it. ²¹ They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys.

²² Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, “Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute’s house and bring her out, along with all her family.”

²³ The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

²⁴ Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the LORD’s house...

²⁷ So the LORD was with Joshua, and his reputation spread throughout the land.

Chapter 7

But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites...

²Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai...⁴So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated...⁶Joshua and the elders of Israel tore their clothing in dismay, threw dust on their heads, and bowed face down to the ground before the Ark of the LORD until evening. ⁷Then Joshua cried out, "Oh, Sovereign LORD, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side!" ⁸Lord, what can I say now that Israel has fled from its enemies? ⁹For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe our name off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?"

¹⁰But the LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this? ¹¹Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me..."

¹⁵The one who has stolen what was set apart for destruction will himself be burned with fire, along with everything he has, for he has broken the covenant of the LORD and has done a horrible thing in Israel."

¹⁶Early the next morning Joshua brought the tribes of Israel before the LORD, and *tribe by tribe, family by family, were singled out until it came down to Achan.*

¹⁹Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me."

²⁰Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. *I took the things I should not have taken.*

²⁴Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor. ²⁵Then Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you." And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies. ²⁶They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. That is why the place has been called the Valley of Trouble* ever since. So the LORD was no longer angry, *and the next time the Israelites went to Ai, they conquered it!*

Picture yourself as one of the Israelites, walking around the city, day after day, silent. How do you feel physically? Emotionally? In your spirit? Look ahead of you, at the ark of the covenant and the priests. How does it make you feel to see those things going before you? How are you feeling regarding the 7th day—the day when you will march 7 times around and shout! As you look forward to that day, what are you thinking? How do you picture it playing out?

When the 7th day comes, you march 7 times around the city. Picture yourself marching with the people. Shout with them. What does that shout sound like? Picture the walls falling down. What does it look like? As you run into the city, what are you feeling?

How does the battle at Ai differ from the one at Jericho? Now picture yourself as Achan. What are you thinking as you take the prohibited things from Jericho? As you bury them beneath your tent? What possessed you to do that? How does it feel as one by one, Joshua calls out your tribe, then your family, then you as the guilty one?

Contrast that to Rahab. You're Rahab, in your home in Jericho as you hear the Israelites marching around the city. You hear the shout, and you feel the rumble as the wall collapses. You wait, listening to the sounds of destruction around you. You wait some more. But, then you hear your door open, and the voices calling you. You gather your family together and rush out the door, under the safety of the spies whom you know---yes---they've come back for you! How do you feel? As you walk out of Jericho, hearing the cries of destruction behind you, and walk towards the Israelite camp, how do you feel? The camp is before you—you see the faces of the Israelites as you make your way to a tent prepared for you. What do their faces say?