

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 6

The Fall of Jericho

Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. 2 And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. 3 You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. 4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him." 6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." 7 And he said to the people, "Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD." 8 And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. 9 The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, "You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout." 11 So he caused the ark of the LORD to circle the city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. 12 Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13 And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. 14 And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days. 15 On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. 16 And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city. 17 And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction.[h] Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. 21 Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword. 22 But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." 23 So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. 24 And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 But

Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. 26 Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. "At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates." 27 So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

The account of the fall and capture of Jericho illustrates at the start of the conquest a repeated theme of the book: the LORD is the sole cause of the victories of Israel. His promises, strategy, and power alone deliver Jericho into the hand of his covenant people. His nation is his agent when, in faith given through his means of grace, it adheres to his Word and by the power of that Word accomplishes his purpose. That purpose involves both Law and Gospel: unbelievers receive judgment, but his faithful people receive the inheritance he has promised in his Word. (CC)

The chapter unfolds according to the following arrangement. One can see the same threefold pattern that was repeated three times in chapters 3–4: (1) the LORD commands Joshua; (2) Joshua commands the people; and (3) the people carry out the LORD's commands. (CC)

6:1 *Jericho*. Modern Tell es-Sultan, site of more than two dozen ancient cities, built and destroyed, one above the other. Many had powerful, double walls, but none of the levels has been positively identified as the one that fell under Joshua. The tell (mound) is roughly 400 by 200 yards in size. Since Jericho may have been a center for the worship of the moon-god (Jericho probably means "moon city"), God was destroying not only Canaanite cities, but also Canaanite religion. See map No. 3 at the end of the Study Bible. (CSB)

Tightly shut up. Lit, "shut and shut off." Every entrance and exit of Jericho is sealed off. (TLSB)

The primary focus of 6:1 is on the heart-melting fear that Jericho has before Israel. That dread has led the city to take great measures. The city is closed to outside business. The seeming impregnability of the city may be a secondary focus. The city takes radical steps because it is aware that this is no ordinary enemy. The people know that the LORD has done miracles for the sake of Israel and fights for them (2:9–11; 5:1). Against other enemies Jericho's defense system would seem sufficient. The LORD's words to Joshua in 6:2 show that the primary emphasis of 6:1 is on the fear and psychologically defeated condition of Jericho. It is clear from the previous chapters that it is the LORD who has produced that dread in the Canaanites (2:9–11; 5:1). Now in chapter 6 it is the LORD alone who will give victory over the well-protected city. What do the best of human defenses avail before the LORD? As Rahab, now barricaded inside Jericho, had confessed, "The LORD, your God, he is God in heavens above and on the earth below" (2:11). (CC)

6:2 *the LORD*. The Lord's command no doubt comes to Joshua through the "commander of the army of the LORD" (5:14), who orders the first conquest of a Canaanite city. (CSB)

The Lord wants Joshua to see the frightened and seemingly impregnable city as already defeated. (TLSB)

The LORD's words in 6:2 show Joshua that he should see walled, gated, and inaccessible Jericho as already defeated. This may be surprising to Joshua as he looks at the city. Note the contrasts that evoke surprise by their juxtaposition. The city is "closed up and ensconced" with her "king" and "strong warriors" (6:1–2). Near these words is the calm assurance of the LORD, "See, I have given into your hand Jericho" (6:2). The fall of Jericho is as good as done. The picture is like that of the boy David before the champion Goliath. Jericho stands there with its wall, swords, spears, javelins, and reputation accumulated over hundreds of years. In spite of all appearances, God's people can expect certain victory because he

has declared it. Like David, when Israel acts “in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the hosts of Israel” (1 Sam 17:45), the human strength of enemies is futile weakness. The LORD has sent the “hornet” (Josh 24:12) of dread to Jericho to melt the hearts of the people and deprive them of “spirit” (2:11; 5:1). (CC)

6:3-5 Why has the LORD planned the seven-day ritual that he commands in 6:3–5? Why not save a week and cause the city to fall now? Part of the answer lies in exercising the faith of Israel. The walls will collapse by the work of the LORD, but he wants Israel to rest on him completely in faith before he hands over the gift. Just as the days on the banks of the flooding river forced the people to place all confidence in the LORD before the miracle (3:1–5), so now during seven days of marching around mighty walled Jericho, the LORD will take away any confidence the people have in themselves and direct all their faith upon himself. (CC)

The obedience of the Israelites to the LORD’s commands will show their faith—a faith the LORD will build up during the seven days of spiritual and physical exercise. Their faith will lead them to trust God’s promise of victory.

The LORD wants more for his people than his material gifts. He wants an ever-growing faith that manifests itself in fear and love. As Joshua will exhort, his desire is for his people “to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, to cling to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (22:5; cf. 23:11). To that end he directs and rules all aspects of their lives. The faith relationship of his people is far more important than the individual gifts he gives, just as Israel’s covenant relationship with him was much more valuable than Jericho. (CC)

Josh 6:3–5 does not intend to give all the details that God commanded to Joshua. Its chief intent is to show that the orders come from God. He is directing the action. The victory will be his. In keeping with the author’s interesting style, further details of God’s orders will emerge as Joshua conveys the LORD’s commands to the people and the people carry out the orders. Interest might lapse if the author were first to present all the words of the LORD to Joshua and then repeat them exhaustively in Joshua’s relay to the people, and then a third time in describing their following actions. By now the reader is well acquainted with this pattern: the LORD addresses Joshua, Joshua passes on the message, and Israel acts on it. This is the fourth time we are seeing this scheme. (CC)

The symbolic number “seven” is striking in its repetition in the commands of the LORD: seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days of marching, and seven circuits around the city on the seventh day. We saw the significance of “seven” as a symbol for completeness in connection with the seven nations to be conquered (3:10; Acts 13:19; see the excursus “The Seven Nations of Canaan”). “Seven” also symbolizes holiness by association with God, who established the significance of the number by his seven-day creation. On the seventh day God had “completed” all his work, and he rested and “sanctified” (designated as “holy”) the seventh day (Gen 2:1–3). Based on the creation narrative, seven is the special number of God, endowed with twofold significance as connoting *completeness* and *holiness*.(CC)

The sevens emphasize that what is about to happen at Jericho is from God himself. The orders are his orders. It will be his judgment on the city, his victory, and his gift to Israel. The Israelites will accomplish nothing apart from him. The author of Joshua lays to rest any potential charges that Israel is merely acting out some superstitious ritual. Victory is tied to the LORD. The Canaanites have already recognized this in the previous miracles (Josh 2:9–11; 5:1). (CC)

The sight and sound of the seven trumpets will be a reminder that the LORD himself is present. At Mount Sinai very loud trumpet blasts signaled his presence (Ex 19:13, 16, 19; 20:18), and it seems that those were trumpets blown by angels (cf. Deut 33:2; Acts 7:53). In Rev 8:7–11:15 seven angels will each blow

a trumpet. But in Joshua 6 it will be the Israelites who blow the trumpets made of rams' horns. Their military function was to muster troops (e.g., Judg 6:34; 1 Sam 13:3–4), stop fighting (2 Sam 18:16), or perhaps here to announce victory. (CC)

The ark of the covenant is the earthly location of the presence of the LORD, as was apparent in the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 3–4). Once again, the LORD by his “incarnation” at the ark is at the center of the miracle of salvation. (CC)

All the people will become involved on the seventh day when they raise a mighty shout that announces the LORD's victory. The same Hebrew word for “shout” (תְּרוּיָה) occurs in Ps 33:3, where believers in the LORD are encouraged to “shout for joy.” The people of Yahweh in both Old and New Testaments have every reason to shout for joy. “He is our help and our shield” (Ps 33:20), and, “He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:57). (CC)

After the people deliver their “great war shout” (Josh 6:5), the LORD will deliver the city over to them. The walls of Jericho will collapse so completely that the people will be able to go up into the city, each man advancing straight ahead. The area is susceptible to earthquakes and tremors, but the author lays to rest any naturalistic ideas of what is about to happen at Jericho. When the LORD announces in advance what will happen, it cannot be explained away as a lucky-chance earthquake. If he chooses to use an earthquake as he used the east wind at the Red Sea (Ex 14:21), it will be beckoned at his precise timing for the sake of his people. A miracle of timing is no less a miracle. There is, however, no mention at all of an earthquake in the Jericho area, only the prediction that the walls will fall on themselves. (CC)

The LORD had announced in advance the miracle at the Jordan, and the people watched it unfold precisely as he had spoken (chapters 3–4). They now have every reason to follow his orders in confidence and wait for and accept his victory by faith. (CC)

6:3 *March around the city.* A ritual act, signifying a siege of the city, that was to be repeated for six days. (CSB)

The Lord evidently wants to build up the faith of Israel during a long ritual before He tears down the walls of Jericho (cf Heb 11:30). The size of Jericho is estimated to have been 9–12 acres. Its circumference may have been ½–1 mi. We know nothing about the width of the line of marchers around the city. A large processional could circle Jericho in less than an hour. Israel is able to complete seven circuits on the seventh day (v 15). (TLSB)

6:4 *trumpets of rams' horns.* Instruments not of music but of signaling, in both religious and military contexts (which appear to come together here). The trumpets were to be sounded (v. 8), as on the seventh day, announcing the presence of the Lord (see 2Sa 6:15; 1Ch 15:28; Zec 9:14). (CSB)

ark. Signified that the Lord was laying siege to the city. (CSB)

seventh day. No note is taken of the Sabbath during this seven-day siege, but perhaps that was the day the Lord gave the city to Israel as the first pledge of the land of rest. To arrive at the goal of a long march on the seventh day is a motif found also in other ancient Near Eastern literature. In any event, the remarkable constellation of sevens (seven priests with trumpets, seven days, seven encirclements on the seventh day) underscores the sacred significance of the event (see Introduction to Revelation: Distinctive Feature) and is, perhaps, a deliberate evoking of the seven days of creation to signal the beginning of God's new order in the world. (CSB)

Trumpets in OT times could be made of rams' horns or of metal. "Jubilee" is a modification of the Hbr word for the horn of a ram. (TLSB)

6:5 *long blast ... loud shout.* Signaling the onset of the attack—psychological warfare, intended to create panic and confusion (see Jdg 7). In the Dead Sea Scroll of "The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness," the Levites are instructed to blow in unison a great battle fanfare to melt the heart of the enemy. (For Dead Sea Scrolls see "The Time between the Testaments," p. 1437.) (CSB)

fall down flat. Complete collapse; pictures the wall coming straight down, rather than toppling on its side. (TLSB)

every man straight in. Not a breach here and there but a general collapse of the walls, giving access to the city from all sides. (CSB)

6:6-14 The order of the march becomes clear now as Joshua relays the commands of the LORD to Israel, and the people carry them out. First in line is "the armed contingent" (6:7). However, the city will not fall by the force of these soldiers. But this army will have a role later in the destruction of the city. Josh 24:11 reveals that at least some of the people of Jericho fought against Israel. There is thus a military role for these armed men. (CC)

Next in line are the "seven priests" (6:6, 8) with the seven trumpets, which they sound continually during the march. (CC)

Then comes "the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (6:8; cf. 6:4, 6, 7), which is the focus of the whole assembly. The ark alone is mentioned in the first day of circling the city in 6:11. It is the central feature because it is the vehicle of the presence of the LORD. (CC)

"The rear guard," mentioned for the first time in 6:9, closes out the line of march. (CC)

Are all the people of Israel involved in the march? These verses do not provide an explicit answer. The small size of the site of Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) and the large numbers in the nation of Israel would seem to indicate that it would be unlikely. (CC)

A detail not mentioned in the orders of the LORD to Joshua in 6:2–5 comes out in Joshua's command in 6:10. Everyone is to be silent during the seven days until Joshua gives the command for the loud shout. There shall be complete silence except for the sound of the trumpets as the city is circled thirteen times! Think of the tension that verbal silence must have created within Jericho, and the sense of awe among the Israelites. This atmosphere is in keeping with the judgment of the LORD marching ever closer to the unrepentant city. (CC)

The repetition that comes in 6:12–14 from relating the identical procession on the second day creates drama. Through this repetition the reader reviews the procedure and also gains a better feeling for what is happening. We sense the sobering judgment of God again encircling those who have lived in sin for so many years. At the same time, in our mind and spirit we may march around the city again with Israel. We identify with the people in the OT church and are comforted by the security and future victory that God alone can and will give to us too—the victory that is ours through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (CC)

We do not know the exact size of Jericho at the time of Joshua. Ancient Jericho is commonly identified with Tell es-Sultan, a "tell" or mound of ruins about a mile northwest of modern Jericho and four and a half miles west of the Jordan River by road. The tell covers about eight and a half acres, and estimates are

that the ancient city was between nine and twelve acres. If so, its circumference may have been roughly between one-half and one mile (one to two kilometers). The procession then could circumvent Jericho in less than an hour, even at a slow pace for the priests carrying the ark, and the marchers would have no trouble completing the seven circuits on the seventh day. (CC)

We are not told how wide the line of march is or how many people are involved. If thousands make the march following the ark, the line might trail far enough behind that the city would be almost completely surrounded by the time the armed contingent, priests, and ark at the head of the line finish their circuit. (CC)

6:6 As in the miracle at the Jordan (chs 3–4), the ark of the covenant will be the focus in the march around the city. The ark, the vehicle and symbol of the Lord’s presence, will show that He is responsible for what will happen at Jericho. (TLSB)

6:7 *the people*. It is unclear whether every individual of Israel joined in the march. The small size of the site of Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) and the large numbers of Israelites would seem to indicate a representative number of people. (TLSB)

armed men. The Hebrew for this term differs from that in v. 3 but may be synonymous with it. It is to be expected that the ark led the procession. If so, the present reference may be to a kind of royal guard (but see v. 9 and note). (CSB)

Armed men lead the march and will have a role later in the destruction of the city. Because of resistance from the leaders of Jericho, the army was needed (24:11). (TLSB)

6:8–14 Throughout these verses the ark of the Lord is made the center of focus, highlighting the fact that it was the Lord himself who besieged the city. (CSB)

6:9 *rear guard*. If the rear guard was made up of the final contingents of the army (see Nu 10:25), the armed guard of vv. 7, 9 constituted the main body of troops. (CSB)

6:10 Silence solemnly depicts the Lord’s approaching judgment. (TLSB)

6:12–14 Literary repetition reflects repetition in action, a common feature in ancient Near Eastern literature. (CSB)

6:14 Implication is that the people continue to march in silence each day. (TLSB)

6:15-21 The moment of truth has come. Just before the climactic collapse, Joshua impresses on the people some critical instructions. The command to “shout” (6:16) is mentioned first, followed immediately by other important instructions (6:17–19). In the actual sequence of events, we may assume Joshua gave these instructions before the shouting began (perhaps even before the march began), because once he gave the command to shout, the ensuing din may have drowned out any subsequent words from Joshua. We have seen a number of times that precise chronological order is not the chief concern of the author. Literary artistry and sustaining a theme often take precedence over strict chronology. (CC)

The crucial command, given in 6:17, is that the whole city (except for Rahab and her family [6:17, 25]; see further below) is to be devoted to the LORD as *cherem*. For further explanation of the technical terminology of the verb and noun involving *cherem*. In its first appearance in Joshua the verb came from the mouth of Rahab (2:10) when she spoke of the complete destruction of the Amorite kings. By her use

of this technical term, Rahab showed the depth of her understanding of the LORD of Israel, whose judgment damns wickedness, but whose mercy covers all who look to him. (CC)

Joshua's explanation here in 6:17–19 makes clear that on one hand, the Canaanites and their animals are to be devoted to the LORD as *cherem* by exterminating them. On the other hand, their valuable articles of silver, gold, bronze, and iron are to be devoted to the LORD as *cherem* by going into the LORD's treasury (rather than being destroyed). The Israelites are not allowed to claim anything as booty—neither persons, taken as war captives, or animals or valuables, taken as spoils of war. None of the *cherem* can be used for any secular purpose, for the *cherem* “is sacred for the LORD” (6:19). Israel is absolutely prohibited from making private use of anything within Jericho. (CC)

Josh 6:19 is the first reference in the Scriptures to an earthly “treasury” (אֲצֻדָּה) belonging to the LORD. Deut 28:12 refers to the heavens as the “treasury” or “storehouse” (אֲצֻדָּה) of the LORD, which he can open to pour out good things on his people. (Deut 32:34–35 speaks of vengeance sealed up in the LORD's “treasuries.”) Josh 6:24 will have an even more concrete reference to “the treasury of the house of the LORD,” which is similar to a phrase that will refer to the future temple to be built by Solomon (“the treasuries of the house of the LORD,” 1 Ki 7:51; 14:26; 15:18; 2 Ki 12:18; 24:13). (CC)

Josh 6:19 has implications for the church's stewardship. The church militant wins “victories” as the Gospel advances and God's kingdom expands through the power of his Word and Sacraments. The people and things that are acquired do not belong to the church, its pastors, or its congregations. They belong to the LORD himself, who shed his blood to purchase all sinners and rescue them from eternal destruction. The people and their possessions are “sacred for the LORD” (Josh 6:19). (CC)

If an Israelite were to take for himself some of the *cherem*, the “things devoted exclusively to the LORD,” then he—and the contaminated camp of Israel—would become *cherem*, a “thing damned to destruction” (6:18). This is exactly what will take place in Joshua 7. Here the author is skillfully preparing us for the next chapter. The verb in 6:18, “to bring disaster” upon Israel, will recur in 7:25, and the related place name, the Valley of *Achor* (“valley of disaster”), will appear in 7:24, 26. (CC)

Other Canaanite cities “at a distance” that did “not belong to the nations nearby” did not have to be completely destroyed (see Deut 20:10–15). But Jericho, a key Canaanite city within the land of promise, falls under the full *cherem* command. Moses had spelled out the reason for the complete destruction of such cities of the land. Idolatry could corrupt Israel so that the people would fall into sin and lose their salvation. Abominations must be completely extirpated from the place where God's people dwell. (CC)

Jericho, which probably means “moon city,” may have been an ancient center of moon worship. We know that detestable Canaanite practices included such things as incest, cultic prostitution, homosexuality, and child sacrifice (e.g., Leviticus 18 and 20). Remains of children have been found in funerary jars at the foundations of temples and other buildings. The OT refers to child sacrifice a number of times, especially in connection with the god Molech. It is now time for God's judgment to fall on the full-grown sin of the people of Canaan (which was not yet full in the day of Abraham [Gen 15:16]). At the same time, the radical action will protect the covenant nation from Canaanite influence. (CC)

Early Christian writers saw Jericho as representing this unbelieving world and the destruction of the city as a picture of the final judgment. For example, Origen, with his emphasis on typology, saw in Jericho a figure or type of this world and the collapse of Jericho as a picture of God's judgment at the end of the world. (CC)

Joshua's last-minute order about Rahab (6:17b) recalls the oath of the spies (2:17–20), an oath honored by Joshua and the LORD. The instructions of Joshua also serve to highlight the grace of the LORD. She and

her family “will live” (6:17) while death and destruction engulf the rest of Jericho. The contrast between her house as an oasis of safety and life amid the surrounding deadly holocaust will be clear. Her justification through faith in the LORD (Heb 11:31; James 2:25) has changed her eternal destiny: she will inherit eternal life (see further the commentary on 2:8–14). In the meantime, even within the doomed city, she enjoys the physical blessing of safety and the assurance of continuing temporal life (6:17, 24). (CC)

Rahab and her family are examples of Gentiles being brought into the Israel of God, the true invisible church that spans both Testaments. God has called all believers, like Rahab, “out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). No matter what their background or nationality, their justification by grace and incorporation into the body of Christ has caused them to be members of “the people of God” (1 Pet 2:9–10). Rahab will become part of spiritual Israel as well as the OT nation. Through faith, she has Abraham as her father, even as all baptized believers in Christ are “sons of Abraham” and “heirs of the promise” (Gal 3:26–29). Like Rahab, the church of all believers has been rescued from “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41), which awaits all those who perish without faith in Jesus Christ. (CC)

Joshua’s instructions in Josh 6:15–19 are complete. Everyone knows precisely what to do and what the LORD will do. Josh 6:20 emphasizes that everything unfolds exactly as the LORD promised in 6:5. The author invites comparison of the two verses through his use of common vocabulary; see the textual notes above on 6:5, 20. Also inviting comparison by way of contrast are 6:1 and 6:20. The city once “closed up and ensconced” with “no one going out and no one going in” (6:1) is now laid bare and defenseless. The LORD was to be trusted absolutely when he stated in 6:2 that he had already given seemingly impregnable Jericho into Joshua’s hand. The spiritual “Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho” summarizes what happens, but it may not emphasize sufficiently that it was *the Lord* who fought the battle of Jericho, while Joshua and Israel received the divine gift. (CC)

The destruction of the city is total. All living things are killed. Readers of Joshua may grieve or even cringe at the thought, and it is good for the account to result in sober repentance. Jesus wept over unrepentant Jerusalem and the impending destruction of the children within its walls (Lk 19:41–44). “As surely as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man turning from his way so he may live” (Ezek 33:11). There is no hint that Israel took pleasure in the act itself of ending lives at Jericho. Soldiers were acting under God’s orders as the agents of his judgment. As “the Lord of all the earth” (Josh 3:11), he has the perfect right to end the time of available grace for those who have mocked his love and chosen their own non-gods. (CC)

We mourn not so much the physical death of Jericho’s citizens as their eternal loss. At the same time, it was for the spiritual wellbeing of Israel that a spiritual menace threatening their own eternal destiny was eliminated. The soldiers of Israel were carrying out their office given by the LORD. Those who would object to the extermination therefore must take up the issue with the LORD and not with Israel. (CC)

Now, in the middle of God’s judgment on those who have trampled on his grace, comes an account of rescue and safety. (CC)

6:17 *devoted*. The ban placed all of Jericho’s inhabitants under the curse of death and all of the city’s treasures that could not be destroyed under consignment to the Lord’s house (v. 19). According to the law of Moses this ban could be applied to animals for sacrifice, to property given to God, or to any person found worthy of death (Lev 27:28–29). It was Moses himself who ruled that all the inhabitants of Canaan be “devoted” by execution for their idolatry and all its accompanying moral corruption (Dt 20:16–18). (CSB)

Rahab ... and ... her house shall live. Honoring the pledge made by the two spies (2:14). (CSB)

Her house was marked by a scarlet cord (2:18) and safeguarded by an oath in the Lord's name (2:12). (Cf vv 22–23.) (TLSB)

6:18 *a thing for destruction.* If Israel took for herself anything that was under God's ban, she herself would fall under the ban. (CSB)

With several related terms, Joshua emphatically warns about what is set apart for destruction. This prepares us for the disobedience of Achan and events of ch 7. (TLSB)

6:19 *iron.* Events of Jsh transpired in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BC), but iron is already in common use. Cf 8:31; 17:16, 18; 22:8. (TLSB)

treasury. Because the temple would not be built for another four centuries, this “treasury” must be at the tabernacle at Gilgal. (TLSB)

6:20 Author does not state whether God used any natural phenomena, such as an earthquake or rain, as an agent of His miracle. At the Red Sea, He used “a strong east wind” (Ex 14:21). Mere naturalistic explanations do not do justice to what the text depicts. (TLSB)

6:21 *men and women, young and old.* Destruction of Jericho is total. Soldiers of Israel follow the orders of the Lord as agents of His just judgment. Residents of Jericho are destroyed, temporally and eternally, for not repenting of their unbelief, child sacrifice, ritual prostitution, etc., despite the abundant time given them to do so (Gn 15:16; cf Ezk 33:11; 2Pt 3:9). In not sparing the Canaanites, the Lord spares Israel from the “abominable practices” and temptations of these people (Dt 20:18). (TLSB)

6:22-25 Notice again the contrast as the rescue of Rahab comes into focus in the middle of surrounding judgment and destruction. That contrast is especially vivid in a comparison of 6:21 and 6:23, which have lists of those destroyed and of those rescued, respectively. By referring to her again as “the prostitute” in 6:22, 25, Joshua accents God's grace toward Rahab. In her past life she was as debased as the rest of Jericho. Now with the two spies as his agents, God has brought her to safety. Through faith in the God of Israel, the former prostitute receives not only physical rescue but eternal deliverance. By continuing to call her “the prostitute,” the author does not imply that she still acts as one. We speak in the same way when we recall the penitent “thief” on the cross, whose time of thievery was in the past when he spoke the confession of faith for which he is remembered (Mt 27:38; Lk 23:39–43). (CC)

The author does not explain why Israel first settles Rahab and her family “*outside* the camp of Israel” (Josh 6:23). The reason may be that she and her relatives initially were considered to be unclean. The same expression, “outside the camp,” is found in many stipulations in Leviticus that prescribe that unclean persons are to reside “outside the camp” until they are pronounced clean (e.g., Lev 13:46); “outside the camp” is also the place where ashes from the altar and remains from sacrificed animals were disposed of (e.g., Lev 4:12, 21; 6:4 [ET 6:11]). The arrangement for Rahab must have been temporary, since the author goes on to say that “she has resided *within* Israel to this day” (Josh 6:25). (CC) This affirmation with “to this day” serves several purposes. (CC)

1. It shows that what the author writes about Jericho's destruction and Rahab's rescue is a historical reality. Rahab's presence among Israel—as well as that of her descendants—verifies the account. (CC)

2. It emphasizes God's grace in snatching a former prostitute from the flames of destruction and bringing her securely and permanently into his chosen nation. It immediately follows the clause “Joshua caused to live” (6:25), and together these suggest that God did more than cause her to continue living

physically after Jericho was destroyed. God also caused this justified woman of faith (Heb 11:31; James 2:25) to live eternally, even as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continued to live (Mt 22:32). (CC)

3. Josh 6:25 shows that God graciously calls other peoples to be incorporated into Israel, his chosen covenant people and OT church. At the same time, Israel should not feel smug about its selection. Rahab the Canaanite prostitute and later Ruth the Moabite become part of Israel and are even in the direct line leading to the Savior! (CC)

Mt 1:5 reveals that Rahab and a man named Salmon were the parents of Boaz, the great-grandfather of David (see also Ruth 4:18–22). Jewish tradition says that Rahab became the ancestress of eight prophets and priests and that Jeremiah was from her line. One tradition even claims that Joshua himself married her,⁴ although the Scriptures offer no support for that tradition. Joshua’s words “I and my house” in 24:15 suggest that Joshua had a family, but the book says nothing more about it. (CC)

After burning the city damned as *cherem* and putting the gold, silver, and articles of bronze and iron into the LORD’s treasury, Joshua performs a final act against Jericho. (CC)

6:22 Cf 2:12–14. In the midst of judgment and destruction comes a scene of mercy and safety. The former prostitute, with her God-given faith (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25–26), and her family are delivered from the judgment that surrounds them—a picture and reminder of God’s mercy in Christ as the place of refuge. (TLSB)

6:23 *outside the camp*. Temporarily; v 25 says Rahab lives “in Israel.” Initially, she and her family may have been considered ceremonially unclean. Cf Lv 13:46. (TLSB)

6:24 *treasury*. Metal coins were not used as money; minting of coins was a much later development (see notes, 24:32; Gn 37:28). These precious metals were likely used to allow Israel and its priests to carry out the worship prescribed by the Lord. E.g., see note, Lv 27:31. (TLSB)

6:25 *saved alive*. Same verb used in 2:13. (TLSB)

she has lived in Israel to this day. The faith of Rahab is noted twice in the NT (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). (CSB)

May mean that Rahab still “lived” in Israel through her offspring; 24:31 seems to show that Jsh was written at least a generation or two after the time of the man Joshua. (TLSB)

6:26-27 These last two verses of the chapter highlight the role of Joshua as leader of the covenant nation. Under God, he accomplishes Law and Gospel, judgment unto death and salvation unto life. In the preceding verse, Joshua was acclaimed as the one who caused Rahab and her family to live (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה הַיּוֹשֵׁב, “Joshua caused to live,” 6:25). (CC)

In 6:26 Joshua pronounces a curse upon anyone who would rebuild Jericho. Since the pagan city received its just punishment for its sin, it would be a sin to attempt to rebuild what God himself has condemned and destroyed. The Hebrew verb for “to swear an oath” (26,6:22, שָׁבַע) has the same consonants as the number “seven” (שֶׁבַע and שֶׁבַע multiple times in 6:4, 6, 8, 13, 15). “The radical consonants of the vb. [verb] suggest some connection with the Common Semitic numeral שֶׁבַע seven,” though the connection is debated (*HALOT*, s.v. שֶׁבַע I). The frequent repetition of numerals for “seven” earlier in Joshua 6 support the idea that the swearing of this curse is the final act of judgment against the city that earlier was assaulted in ways involving “seven.” The acts of Israel against Jericho involved the seven priests blowing seven trumpets, seven days of marching, and seven circuits around the city on the seventh day. (CC)

The last holy act against Jericho is Joshua's swearing of the curse. This is the only cursing of a conquered city mentioned in the OT. The laying of the foundations would be the first step in rebuilding the city and would include the foundations for new city walls to take the place of the ones that had collapsed at the sound of the trumpets and shouting of the Israelites. That first step would cost the offender his eldest son, his firstborn, who would normally be his heir—a tremendous loss. The last step would be to set up the doors in the rebuilt city gate, and the city gate was a crucial defensive fortification in ancient siege warfare. That last step would cost the offender his last son, his youngest. While the curse does not explicitly say that those who perish (and also the rebuilders) would be damned to hell, that is an implication of the curse, for the rebuilding would be a direct violation of the LORD's Word. (CC)

That implication is supported by the similarities between the actions in Joshua 6 and the words of Moses in Deut 13:13–17 (ET 13:12–16): the LORD commands that an Israelite city in which wicked men encourage the people to worship other gods must be destroyed, its inhabitants and animals killed, and its booty burnt, and the city must never be rebuilt. That command uses a form of the same verb in Joshua's curse: לֹא תִבְנֶה, "it must not be rebuilt," in Deut 13:17 (ET 13:16) and וַיִּבְנֶה, "and (re)builds," in Josh 6:26. Thus Joshua's treatment of Jericho is in harmony with that command for the punishment of a city of idolatry—the primal sin that elicited the first divine curse (Gen 3:14–19). (CC)

Joshua's oath is in the form of Hebrew poetry with its characteristic parallelism. The poetic form leads some to think that Joshua used a previous curse formula, but it is more likely that he, under the inspiration of the Spirit, is composing a new verse. The curse of the oath was fulfilled by the LORD some five hundred years later during the reign of wicked King Ahab (874–853 B.C.). The rebuilding of the city in violation of the LORD's command is one more example of the apostasy that characterized that era of idolatry combated by the prophet Elijah. 1 Ki 16:34 affirms that the curse was actually "the Word of the LORD" and that the LORD spoke it through Joshua. (CC)

The LORD evidently wanted to preserve the collapsed site as a continuing reminder of his judgment against sin and his free gift of salvation to Israel. Its function would have been similar to that of the stone monuments that memorialized Israel's crossing of the Jordan River (Josh 4:2–7, 20–24). After the conquest of Jericho, God's people could *live* in Jericho under his protection without the curse affecting them (see Josh 18:21; Judg 3:13; 2 Sam 10:5). Later in Joshua the site of Jericho will come under the allotment of the tribe of Benjamin (Josh 18:21). However, the rebuilding of its foundations and gates set up human defenses that the LORD had torn down, and the LORD then implemented the curse. (CC)

Several NT parallels come to mind. The curse involving the doors in the rebuilt gate of the damned city suggest the words of Jesus about his church defeating the gates of hell:

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not be strong enough to prevail against her. (Mt 16:18) (CC)

Joshua's oath condemning Jericho, which witnessed the LORD's miracles (Josh 2:9–11; 5:1), anticipates Jesus' woes against the cities that had witnessed his miracles, but had failed to repent and believe in him (Mt 11:20–24; Lk 10:13–15). Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum will fare even worse than the Canaanite cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom! Jesus' woes against those cities are more severe than the curse pronounced by Joshua since they do not just refer to temporal death, but describe the final judgment of those cities on the Last Day and their eternal consignment to Hades or hell:

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted up to heaven? To hell you shall be brought down. For if in Sodom had been done the miracles that were done in you, it [Sodom] would have remained to this day. (Mt 11:23; cf. Lk 10:15) (CC)

Jesus explains that the rejection of his emissaries—those who preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God brought by him—is rejection of himself and rejection of God the Father (Lk 10:16). Woe to those who reject the Gospel! (CC)

The supreme woe will be Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. His lament echoes the entire book of Lamentations, uttered by the prophet Jeremiah upon the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in A.D. 587:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often have I desired to gather your children in the way a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings, but you were unwilling. See, your house is abandoned to you desolate. I say to you, you shall not see me from now on until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt 23:37–39) (CC)

The rejection of Christ by Jerusalem as a whole will bring the razing of the city and the temple in A.D. 70, when not one stone shall be left upon another (Mt 24:1–2). The perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus on the cross "once for all" (Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) put an end forever to the God-pleasing temple worship with animal sacrifices. The temple has never been rebuilt. Whether God will ever permit it to be rebuilt in the future remains to be seen, but any such attempt would be an insult to the completed sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. The curse of God would fall upon any who suppose that Jesus' atonement is insufficient and needs to be supplemented by any rituals at a rebuilt stone temple. God's new temple is the body of Christ himself, torn down and then raised on the third day (Jn 2:13–22), and the church as the body of Christ, built of living stones (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5). (CC)

The most famous chapter of Joshua ends by telling us that its central character has himself become famous. The author also tells us why. The LORD is with him, just as he was with Moses, according to his repeated promise (1:5; 3:7; cf. 1:9). Joshua did not push back Jordan's waters or push over Jericho's walls. The LORD is the hero of those acts. Yet in his gracious way, he shares his fame with his obedient servant Joshua, who trusts and obeys. The LORD has given him success and has exalted him according to his promises (1:8; 3:7). (CC)

Great leaders in the view of God are people of humble faith, obedience, and service (see 1 Sam 15:22; 16:7; Mt 20:26). We can learn much about God-pleasing leadership by watching Joshua. That the LORD was "with" Joshua and that his "fame" spread throughout the land (Josh 6:27) presages the much greater way in which God was with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his fame has spread all over the earth, as preached by Peter, leader in the early church, when the Gospel first came to Gentiles, who believed and were baptized (Acts 10):

You yourselves know the word that happened throughout all Judea ... [about] Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for *God was with him*. ... Him they put to death by hanging on a tree, but this one God raised on the third day. ... And he [God] commanded to us to preach to the people and to testify that this is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To this one all the prophets testify that the forgiveness of sins is received through his name by everyone who believes in him. (Acts 10:37–43) (CC)

Joshua's obedience and fame will come into sharp contrast with the disobedience and infamy of Achan in the next chapter. (CC)

6:26 *Cursed ... is the man.* Jericho itself was to be devoted to the Lord as a perpetual sign of God's judgment on the wicked Canaanites and as a firstfruits offering of the land. This was a way of signifying that the conquered land belonged to the Lord. The curse was fulfilled in the rebellious days of King Ahab (1Ki 16:34). (CSB)

God had ordered the destruction of Jericho because of its sin. It would thus be an evil act to rebuild what God had condemned and destroyed. The collapsed foundation and gates would be a continuing reminder of His judgment against sin and His victory for Israel. Israel could live in the city (18:21; Jgs 3:13 [the "city of palms" is Jericho]; 2Sm 10:5) but not rebuild its foundation and gates. This curse was "according to the word of the LORD," and not merely Joshua's idea (cf 1Ki 16:34). *Cursed*. See p 6.

6:27 *fame*. Or, "report," "news." The Lord has given Joshua success and has exalted him according to His promises of 1:8 and 3:7. The victory over Jericho was God's work; yet by grace, He shares His fame with His leader. (TLSB)

Ch 6 As a woman of faith in the Lord, Rahab is kept safe in the middle of the destruction of unrepentant Jericho; she becomes part of Israel. God is a God of justice, who cannot let sin go unpunished. Judgment awaits those who refuse His loving forgiveness in Christ. Yet, God is also a God of love, whose justice was satisfied when His Son took the punishment for the sin of the world. The Lord delivers us, through faith in Jesus, from the destruction awaiting this present evil age. • We thank You, O Lord, that while You are just, You are the justifier of all who rest their faith in Jesus. We praise You, O Jesus, that You gave Yourself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age. Amen. (TLSB)