



3

The Battle of Jericho

Key Theme

- God is faithful to His promises.

Key Passages

- Joshua 5:13–6:27; Exodus 23:20–23; Hebrews 11:30

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how God gave victory to the Israelites.
- Describe how God was faithful to His promises to Israel.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will place a bookmark at Joshua 5, Exodus 23, and Hebrews 11.

Students will put the Memory Verse Strips into order and then practice saying the verse together and/or with a partner.

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today's study passages.

- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



Studying God's Word

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Joshua received unusual battle plans for the taking of Jericho, but he and Israel were obedient, and God was faithful to fulfill His promise to deliver Jericho into their hands. Rahab's life was also spared from destruction just as the spies had promised her.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read Joshua 3–6.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Jericho Rediscovered

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Students will discover what archaeologists have found to confirm the truths of the Bible's historical account of the destruction of Jericho.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Joshua 5:13–6:27 and Hebrews 11:30, noticing that the faith of Israel was instrumental in accomplishing God’s plan to defeat Jericho.

After God’s charge to Joshua to lead the nation into the Promised Land and after the episode of Rahab and the spies, the nation of Israel itself was still on the eastern banks of the Jordan and had not yet crossed into the land that God had promised them. Chapters 3 and 4 of Joshua tell of the miraculous stopping of the Jordan River’s waters, allowing Israel to cross on dry ground, and of the memorial stones that Israel placed on the other side to commemorate God’s faithfulness. The bearing of the Ark of the Covenant before the nation (Joshua 3:11) declared that God was fulfilling His purpose to establish a nation for His own glory, which He had declared to Abraham nearly 500 years earlier.

The first obstacle before Israel was the city of Jericho. In Joshua 5:13–15, a Man identified as “the Commander of the Lord’s army” appeared to Joshua. This Man represents a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance in history of the Lord Jesus. If that were not the case, Joshua would not have obeyed the Man when commanded to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. This was the Son of God Himself in human form, declaring that He would lead and fight for Israel. This was to be no ordinary battle!

The battle plan from the Lord must have seemed very strange to Joshua. Jericho responded to Israel’s approach by securely shutting up the city (Joshua 6:1), an indication that they expected a siege. God’s instructions to Joshua were for the army of Israel to march

around the city once each day for six days, following the Ark of the Covenant, with the priests blowing trumpets, but making no other noise (Joshua 6:3–4). Then on the seventh day, the city would be circled seven times in the same manner, and finally, the Israelites would be instructed to shout—and God promised that at that time, the city would be miraculously destroyed, leaving a path for Israel to march directly in and take the city (Joshua 6:4–5). No other battles had been fought by Israel in this manner, and no others would be. God had a particular purpose to mark this victory, the first in the Promised Land, with a miraculous triumph that would follow a week of ceremony. God desired to conquer Jericho in a way that could not be attributed to Israel’s military prowess. Israel would have had every reason, from a standpoint of military tactics and wisdom, to doubt whether God’s directions for the battle would be successful. On the other hand, the Israelites knew the faithfulness of God’s care for 40 years in the wilderness, knew from the previous generation of their great deliverance from Egypt, and knew that God gives the victory from their successful battles against the kings Sihon and Og (Deuteronomy 2:26–3:11). The Israelites were convinced that God’s promise was to be trusted, and they obeyed His seemingly strange commands for the battle of Jericho.

Israel’s faith at Jericho is mentioned in Hebrews 11 along with many others who demonstrated their faith in God—among them Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Rahab. These saints of God had faith that led them to look beyond immediate circumstances and trust that God’s ways would lead to blessing beyond any earthly situation. In all of those examples, faith led to obedient action (see Hebrews 11:7–31). Israel obeyed God’s instructions for the battle, trusting His goodness and faithfulness to His promises. After the seventh circle

around the city on the seventh day, Israel shouted, the walls of Jericho fell, and the Israelites went straight into the city and destroyed their enemies—God’s enemies.

Just as the spies had promised, Rahab and her family were spared (Joshua 6:25) as reward for her help in protecting the spies before the battle (Joshua 2). Joshua 6:25 tells us that “she dwells in Israel to this day,” showing that Rahab became one of God’s people. It also shows us that the book of Joshua wasn’t written very long after the events of the book occurred, since Rahab was still living.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

For much of the twentieth century, archaeologists declared that the biblical account of Jericho could not have happened as the Bible said it did. More recent discoveries, however, have not only led to an archaeological revision of the date of Jericho’s destruction that accords with Joshua’s time in history but have also shown that the ruins that have been uncovered were destroyed in a way that is perfectly consistent with the Bible’s description of the event. What was once considered a “problem” of the Bible’s inconsistency with archaeological research has turned out, upon further discovery and study, to be an example of archaeological evidence displaying the trustworthiness of the Bible’s accuracy. Of course, God’s Word can be trusted completely, with or without such scientific “vindication.”

The Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days. But were those ordinary days or long periods of time? Jonah was in the great fish for three days, but were those ordinary days or long periods of time? Of course, those are ridiculous questions. But it is much

the same with those who question the length of days in the creation account of Genesis 1. No Christian believes that the Israelites marched around Jericho for thousands of years or that Jonah was in the great fish for 3,000 years. Why? Because Scripture is clear. Yet, why do some Christians continue to question the clear meaning of Genesis 1? The answer is that they have been influenced by modern scientists who believe in millions of years. Thus, they have allowed man’s ever-changing opinions to have authority over the unchanging Word of God. The word translated as “day” in Genesis 1 (and in the Jericho account) is the Hebrew word *yom*. In this chapter, *yom* is modified by a number and used in connection with the word “night” and the phrase “evening and morning.” Each time *yom* is used outside of Genesis 1 in just one of these ways, it means a normal-length day. There should be absolutely no question that day means a literal, 24-hour day in Genesis 1 because that chapter uses *yom* with the combination of all three—a number, the word “night,” and with “evening and morning.”

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Almighty Lord, I am awed by your power and faithfulness as I study this lesson. You are able. Help me Lord to live a life of faith like Rahab and Joshua and to pass that desire on to the children in my class. May each encounter I have with my students help them to fall in love with you and your Word more and more. Praise the name of the Lord! You are more than able.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Joshua 5, Exodus 23, and Hebrews 11 with strips of paper.
- They will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verse together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

Use this time at the beginning of class to review the Memory Verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



Review

In our last lesson, we looked at the two spies that Joshua sent to Jericho in order to prepare to take the Promised Land.

- ? Who can summarize what happened to the spies as they went to Jericho? *They stayed at the home of Rahab the harlot. She hid them from the king's men and lied to them to protect them. Rahab let them out the window and they hid in the mountains for three days before returning to report to Joshua.*

God hates lying, but He was gracious to Rahab, and her faith is commended in several places in Scripture. God used Rahab to protect the spies and God used the spies to encourage the Israelites.

Today, we are going to continue looking at the taking of the Promised Land with the battle to take the city of Jericho.



Studying God's Word

- Write on the board, "Can God be trusted?"

READ THE WORD

There was a bit of time that passed from the time the spies returned to Joshua and the battle of Jericho. Joshua 3 describes the Israelites moving about eight miles to the west from Acacia Grove (Shittim) to the Jordan River. The priests led the procession of the people with the Ark of the Covenant in hand. As they came to the river, the waters stopped flowing and the ground was dry! God had performed this miracle as a sign to the Israelites—He would surely give them the land (3:9–14). The waters stopped upstream about 15 miles from the crossing and all of the people crossed on dry land during the flooding season.

After they crossed, Joshua had one member of each of the twelve tribes take a large stone from the river. They stacked them in a pile as a

memorial for future generations (4:1–9). As the priests left the river bed, the waters returned and the people camped in Gilgal on the west side of the river. They were about two miles from Jericho. Chapter 5 records the circumcision of the men born during the 40 years in the wilderness. After this, they kept the Passover feast of the produce of the land. From that point, God stopped sending the manna and the people ate food from the Promised Land (5:10–12). 450 years after He gave the promise of the land to Abraham, He was about to fulfill it.

Let's read Joshua 5:13–6:5 together and make some observations of the text. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Joshua 5:13–6:5

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who did Joshua encounter near Jericho? *The Commander of the army of the Lord.*
- ? How did Joshua respond? *He bowed to the earth and worshipped, asking what he was to do.*
- ? What additional command was given to Joshua? *To remove his sandals on the holy ground.*
- ? What instructions did Joshua get for the battle? *The army was to march around the city with the ark and seven priests blowing ram's horns once a day for six days. On the seventh day they were to march around seven times and then blow the horns and shout to cause the walls to fall down.*
- ? What would happen after the walls fell? *All of the armed men were to enter the city.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have made some observations, there are some pieces of this text that require a bit of interpretation.

- ? What other encounter from our past study is very similar to this one? *It sounds very much like Moses's encounter at the burning bush in Exodus 3. Joshua and Moses were both told to take the sandals off of their feet because they were on holy ground.*

This makes sense as Joshua was the successor of Moses.

So, who was this Commander of the army of the Lord? It can't be an angel because He receives worship from Joshua—something angels do not do. In 6:2, the commands for taking the city come from the Lord. So this is likely a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. He appeared to Joshua in a similar manner to the appearances to Abraham (Genesis 18) and Moses (Exodus 3).

- ? Let's also look back to Exodus 23:20–23. What promise is given to the Israelites in this passage? *Have someone read the passage. God will send an angel before them to lead them into the Promised Land.*

Exodus 23:20–23

FAITHFUL

Now, the character of this Angel described in this passage seems to fit God Himself. He is to be obeyed and has the authority to pardon their transgressions. It seems that this Angel is the same as the Commander of the army of the Lord who has appeared to Joshua. It is likely Jesus appearing in what is called a Christophany. Jesus was the one leading His people through the wilderness and who was carrying the sword to lead them into battle. What assurance Joshua must have had knowing that the Lord Himself was fighting the battle.

God is faithful to His promises, and the promise of the inheritance of Canaan was about to be fulfilled for Israel.



READ THE WORD

Joshua 6:6–27

Let's take a look at the rest of the account to see how God delivered Jericho to the Israelites. Let's start in Joshua 6:6 and read the rest of the chapter. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What happened for the first six days?** *The army marched with the ark around the city, seven priests blowing the trumpets, and returned to the camp.*
- ? **What did God tell the people to carry ahead of them as they marched around Jericho?** *Verse 6. The Ark of the Covenant.*
- ? **Does anyone know what the Ark of the Covenant represented to the people?** *God's presence.*
- ? **What instruction did Joshua give the people in verse 10?** *He told them not to make any noise or speak as they were marching until he gave the command to shout.*
- ? **What was different about the seventh day?** *They marched around seven times and then Joshua gave the command to shout.*
- ? **What other commands did Joshua give on the seventh day (verses 17–19)?** *1) They were to destroy all of the people; 2) only Rahab and her family were to be spared; 3) they were to stay away from the accursed things; 4) all of the metal vessels were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord.*

- ? **What happened when they shouted?** *The walls fell flat and the army went up into the city and destroyed everything alive in the city.*
- ? **How was Rahab saved?** *Joshua sent the two spies to bring her and her family out of the city to the area outside of the camp of the Israelites.*
- ? **What additional detail of the destruction do we find in verse 24?** *They burned the city and only kept the metal vessels.*

Discover the Truth

- ? **Is there a scientific explanation for what happened to the walls?** *Some may suggest that the loud cry sent sonic waves to break up the walls or that there was an earthquake that coincided with the shouting, but we trust this was a supernatural act of God that brought down the walls of this fortified city.*
- ? **Turn to Hebrews 11:30. What do we learn about why the walls came down?** *Read the verse. Because of the faith of the people in the promise of God.*

Hebrews 11:30

Imagine standing on the top of the walls of an ancient city built on a hill. You think you have enough food to outlast a siege of many months as this foreign army approaches. Then, you watch them march around the city blowing trumpets—for six days! Weird, no? Then on the seventh day, they do it seven times and start screaming. Double weird.

All of a sudden, the walls you had put your trust in tumbled down the hill making a nice ramp for the army, and soon they are swarming within the city. All of those things you heard about the God of the Israelites were true, but it was too late.

God had given the Israelites victory over this fortified city in a most unconventional way. Their faith in God to deliver the victory was not in vain and God showed Himself to be faithful.

As we would expect, archaeological studies of the ancient city ruins of Jericho show features consistent with what the Bible teaches. The walls are crumbled and there are burnt remains of the city.





Activity: Jericho Rediscovered

MATERIALS

- Walls of Jericho Picture printed from the Resource DVD-ROM

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Walls of Jericho Picture. Use information about the archaeological digs related to Jericho to help the students understand the miracle God accomplished and the great faith of Joshua and the Israelites.

Sometimes we read about the miracles of God in the Bible, but we don't comprehend how great they really were. Take a look at this cross-section diagram of the double wall system of Jericho based on what an archaeologist found while digging there.

Pass out the Walls of Jericho Picture now if you haven't yet.

Refer to the picture. Can you see how the walls were built upon a slanted, earthen mound? Check out the lowest stone wall at its base. It was 12–15 feet high. On top of that was a second wall. It was a mud brick wall, six feet thick, which stood 20–26 feet high.

- ? Can you see how huge those two walls, on top of each other, at the bottom of a steep hill would be? *Yes.*

The two walls together make up a wall that was 22–41 feet tall. And that was just the bottom of the mammoth fortified wall that surrounded Jericho. Notice how the ground sloped up steeply from those two walls and was topped by another sturdy mud brick wall.

- ? How does looking at this picture help you realize the great faith that the Israelites had? *They knew they couldn't get through the wall on their own; only a miracle would allow them to defeat Jericho.*

- ? Do you see how great the miracle was that day, as God brought victory to the Israelites? *Yes.*

Refer to the Seven C's Timeline. The ancient city of Jericho has been discovered. The destruction of Jericho took place

around 1400 BC. About 3,000 years later, archaeologists excavated the site. That means they dug it up. These digs were in the early 1900s, 1930s, 1950s, and in 1997.

The discoveries of the archaeologists have confirmed the truth of the Bible. Archaeologists found that the city and the walls were collapsed, just as the Bible says in Joshua 6:24. The Israelites burned the city and everything in it. It's not surprising that archaeologists found a layer of burned ash and debris about three feet thick and massive devastation in the Jericho digs. And interestingly, they found that in some places the walls at the bottom crumbled forward forming a ramp of rubble which would have made it possible for the Israelites to go "up into the city" just as described in Joshua 6:20!

And what about Rahab's house? Wouldn't it have been destroyed, too? Well, the excavation of 1907 to 1909 found that a portion of the lower city wall had not fallen

with the rest of the city. There were often houses built against the wall! And based on what the Bible tells us, that Rahab's home was "on the wall," it is very possible this is where her home may have been.

If you are interested, you can find out more about these details by reading the background material in your Student Guides.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The Lord performed a great miracle in Jericho. He fulfilled His promise that Israel would destroy Jericho, and Rahab was saved. God fulfilled His promises by bringing down the walls in a very unusual battle. Many details of the biblical description of the destruction of Jericho have been confirmed by recent archaeological digs. The ruins of Jericho serve to remind us that our Lord is faithful to keep His promises, and that His Word is true.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God is faithful. He had promised for 450 years to bring Abraham's descendants into the Promised Land, and He kept that promise. Not only was He faithful, but He demonstrated His absolute power as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down with just a shout from the army. The faith of the Israelites and the power of God brought them victory—their first victory in the Promised Land.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? In the past, the Israelites had failed to trust God. How did their attitude toward God influence the events of our lesson? *Their faith in God brought them favor in God's eyes and He delivered them the victory. Likewise, when we trust God and act in faith, He is pleased to bless us.*
- ? Some people read the account of the destruction of Jericho and write it off as a myth. What things in the account would lead them to this conclusion, and how can we approach these skeptics? *Some may object to the miraculous blocking of the river or the collapse of the walls at a shout. For these people, it would involve asking questions and trying to understand why they reject the miracles and then responding as fits the situation. Others object to the idea that a loving God would command all of the people in the city to be destroyed. These people likely do not understand the nature of sin and the holiness of God. The Amorites were a wicked and idolatrous people and God was judging them for their sin (see Genesis 15:16). Discuss any other ideas mentioned.*
- ? What promises from God to us can we be assured of because of His faithfulness—the faithfulness we have seen in fulfilling the promise of a land for Israel? *Discuss various answers and be sure to identify and read the passages for each.*
- ? What misunderstandings or misconceptions were corrected in your mind as we studied this passage today? *Discuss various ideas.*



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:8–9 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His faithfulness.
- Praise God for the promises He has made to us.
- Ask God for more faith to trust in His promises.