

## Bi235 Old Testament 2

### *Lesson Bi235-4 The Conquest of Jericho*

Making a new start in life is difficult. You may have a good chance to succeed, but there are still risks. Even when you are sure that God is leading you, you must strive to obey him and act bravely. Joshua and the Israelites were making a new start. They were obeying the voice of Yahweh. They were camped at Gilgal on a plain west of the Jordan River. However, their way into the Promised Land was blocked by the walled city of Jericho. They could not move forward without conquering this city.

Before doing anything else, they celebrated the important festival called Passover. A generation earlier, God had sent an angel of death throughout Egypt. In Egypt the firstborn sons, calves, goats, and sheep had all died, except for those in the Israelite community. The angel passed over the Israelite houses and did not harm them. They were protected because they had obeyed God's messenger, sacrificed a lamb, and put its blood on the frames of their doors. Then they stayed inside and ate supper, while the death angel carried out God's judgment on the Egyptians (Ex 12:21-30).

The Passover became a celebration every year. The Jewish people still celebrate Passover every spring. Passover remembers the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. God helped the Israelites to escape from the most powerful nation in the world.

So, Joshua and the people prepared a spiritual celebration, before going any farther into Canaan. Israel's spiritual traditions were important to her military success. Yahweh told Joshua to circumcise every male that had been born during the 40 years in the wilderness. Then the people celebrated God's covenant and his faithfulness to Israel by eating the Passover meal.

Before attempting anything big, we should remember everything that God has done for us in the past. We remind ourselves that we are not alone. God was with us in the past, and he will be with us in the present and future. When we express our thanks to God, he is pleased.

God had promised land to the Israelites. This promise, of course, included more than just dirt. It included what the land produced: crops, fruit-trees, and abundance of harvests. This Passover marked an end of something precious and the beginning of something equally precious. The special food called 'manna' came to an end. God had supplied manna since the Israelites had left Egypt. But, they now ate food that had grown in Canaan, the Promised Land.

These events signaled the end of the years of wandering in the wilderness and the beginning of the conquest of Canaan. Joshua and the Israelites now faced the city of Jericho. How would they conquer it?

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and fighting men. March around the city once each day for the next six days. Seven priests should go first carrying and blowing trumpets made of rams' horns. Other priests should follow, carrying the Ark of the Covenant." (The ark was a symbol of God's presence.)

"On the seventh day," Yahweh told Joshua, "march around Jericho seven times. Tell the priests to blow the trumpets as they march. On the seventh time around, when the trumpets sound a

long blast, the Israelite armies should shout. When they do, the city walls will collapse” (Josh 6:2-16).

Joshua told the people all that God had told him. They started to march. “Don’t say a word,” Joshua said, “until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!” They did as Joshua had commanded, marching around once each day for six days. At night they returned and rested in their camp. The people inside Jericho were afraid because they knew that God was with the Israelite armies.

On the seventh day Israel marched around the city seven times. On the seventh time around, when the priests blew a long blast on the trumpets, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For Yahweh has given you the city! Everyone and everything in Jericho should be destroyed, for everything belongs to Yahweh. Only Rahab and her family will be spared. Don’t take anything you see in the city. Otherwise, you will be disobeying Yahweh. It all belongs to him. All silver, gold, bronze, and iron must go into the treasury of Israel, not into any person’s possession.”

The walls collapsed, as God had promised, and the Israelites took over the city. Every living thing still in the city was destroyed. Probably many inhabitants—instead of waiting to be killed—had fled the city. The people who didn’t get out, such as the city’s defenders, were killed, along with all the cattle, sheep, and donkeys.

As they entered the city, Joshua told the two spies, “Go into Rahab’s house and bring her and her family out, as you promised.” So they did so. They found her house with a scarlet rope hanging down from a window. No one in her house had tried to escape. Rather, they had trusted the spies’ promise of rescue. The spies brought Rahab and all her family out and put them in a place near the camp of Israel. They were the only people to survive the destruction of Jericho. The whole city was burned (Josh 6:17-25).

Why was Jericho destroyed so completely? According to their own writings, they worshipped many gods and goddesses. They worshipped idols, as well. They praised cruelty in warfare, engaged in human sacrifice, and practiced magic sexual rituals. In God’s view, they were not innocent people. So the destruction of the Canaanites was partly punishment for their way of life.

It was also done to protect Israel from Canaanite practices. A big problem for the Israelite tribes in the years ahead would be the temptation to adopt pagan rituals—ungodly practices—from their neighbors. God wanted to protect Israel from Canaanite influence. There was no way that Israelite religion and Canaanite religion could co-exist. Israel began this invasion because Yahweh had commanded it.

And Jericho was not to be rebuilt, commanded Joshua. Israel’s plan was to drive westward, up into the Judean highlands. With Jericho in rubble down in the valley, Israel had no military protection behind it to the east. Israel’s only protection from that direction was Yahweh himself.

This story is **important** because it shows us that God determined to drive out the Canaanites, and he used Israel to do it. This was unique. Neither Israel nor any other nation was intended to repeat this kind of conquest. The conquest of Jericho was a divine miracle. The walls collapsed and the Israelites won a military victory. God was involved, and human obedience was required for success.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God judges the Canaanites for their unbelief. Yet, he also blesses the Israelite people who trust him and obey his commands. Human wickedness will ultimately receive judgment. But God will exalt those who humbly follow him.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. Why was Jericho an obstacle for Israel? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “Jericho guarded the valley between the Jordan River and the central highlands of Canaan,” you are correct.
2. Why did Israel circumcise all the men and celebrate the feast of Passover before beginning their attack? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “Because spiritual preparation was more important to success than military preparation,” you answered correctly.
3. Why were Rahab and her family and friends spared? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “Because they hid the spies and didn’t allow them to be captured,” you are right.
4. Why were the Canaanites in Jericho destroyed? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “God was punishing them for their wickedness, and protecting Israel from their bad influence,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and re-tell it to someone until you feel sure you are repeating the words and actions correctly. Then ask a friend who has never heard this story to listen to you as you share it.

Tell your friend that just like Joshua, we can be confident of God’s presence when we obey his commands. God’s commands can be understood and obeyed. As Jesus clearly stated, “Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:30). Memorize this verse from the New Testament as you tell this story from the Old Testament.