

Hymns: 12 I'll Fly Away 34 When We All Get to Heaven

Scripture: Psalm 50:1-6; 19:1

Big idea: Paradise Regained

Our scripture text for today is: **Joshua 6:1-27**

Introduction

Have any of you been to paradise? – paradise on earth. Perhaps on your honeymoon, a cruise, or a special vacation. I've been to four Hawaiian islands, many Caribbean islands, Cozumel, Rivera Maya, and Cabo San Lucas in Mexico, and Miami Beach. Many of these beaches have that captivating white sand that plays with the sky and ocean to produce a picturesque turquoise blue hue to go along with hypnotic waves and soft warm breezes.

Perhaps your paradise has crisp, majestic, snow-capped mountains against a stark blue expanse of the heavens with flowers and steams at the lower levels frequented by cute, plant-eating creatures. Today, were taking a trip to a paradise whose name means "fragrant place." It has abundant water, fertile soil of a river valley, and a near ideal climate produced by an elevation 834 feet below sea level (still almost 600 feet above the Dead Sea) with a latitude about the same as Savannah, GA.

From Wikipedia we read:

Jericho is claimed to be the oldest city in the world, and it is also the city with the oldest known protective wall. Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of more than 20 successive settlements in Jericho,

Copious springs in and around the city have attracted human habitation for thousands of years. Jericho is described in the Hebrew Bible as the "city of palm trees".

These palm trees are date palms rather than coconut palms that come to mind most frequently to us.

While Jericho is the oldest known city, Damascus holds the record for the oldest continuously inhabited city. That's because Jericho was laid to ruin and became a wasteland multiple times (it currently is a wasteland by the way) during its existence. Today, we're going to look at the most famous example of the destruction if Jericho over 3400 yrs ago. The ruins are there. You can still see it.

You may recall from last time, Joshua led two million people across the Jordan River to the outskirts of Jericho called Gilgal. They set up memorials of their crossing, resumed circumcision, celebrated Passover, saw the manna cease, and encountered the preincarnate Christ – captain of the LORD's host. This was right after they crossed over and right before where we're getting to right now.

This sets the stage for the first conquest in the Promised Land. In Joshua chapter 6, we shall see the mighty power and faithfulness of the LORD on display.

Joshua 6

Marching Orders from the LORD

[1] Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

[2] And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

[3] And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

[4] And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

[5] And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

The LORD is telling Joshua what he's supposed to do and what's going to happen. Jericho was a walled city with gates. The gates were all shut. They knew the Israelites were coming. This half-million-man army was coming to take their city. So they closed up the gates. They felt like they were impenetrable – very much like a turtle. If you approach a turtle it closes in. That's what they were doing.

The LORD gave the instructions.

- Jericho was inhabited by several thousand Canaanites (likely Amorites).
- God waited over 400 years before finally bringing judgment to them.
- The area inside the walls was about six acres.
- Outside if you include the wall – the wall plus the inside – it's nine acres.
- Capitol Square Raleigh is 4 ½ acres. Jericho equals two of them.
- Wall construction
 - 12-15 ft high foundation wall.
 - On top of that was a mudbrick wall 6 ft thick and 20-26 feet high..
 - From the base of that wall was a sloped embankment rising 46 ft above ground level.
 - Finally, another mudbrick wall 6 ft thick and 20-26 feet high on top of the embankment.

So we're talking about a wall that was over twice the height of this building we're in right now.

Ark of the Covenant

Joshua 6

[6] And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns

That's the shofar if you're familiar with that.

before the ark of the LORD.

[7] And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.

[8] And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and

the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

Now this Ark of the Covenant is an interesting piece of furniture.
{Show picture from Rose's Bible Charts and Maps pp. 154}

The ark was 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ feet long with height and width equal at 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet. It was a box constructed from wood overlaid with pure gold. It had rings on the side through which poles were inserted to transport it. They were not supposed to touch this thing. It was a holy box. The top was called the Mercy Seat. It was constructed of gold with a couple of cherubim facing each other bowing down with their wing tips touching. That was the Ark of the Covenant.

Inside the Ark were three symbolic items (Hebrews 9:4 but later just the commandments I Kings 8:9). First was Aaron's rod that budded. This was a dead stick that burst forth with blossoms. All three of these symbols remind us of Jesus Christ. He died on a cross, a tree, a stick, yet He burst forth in newness of life and also He gives us newness of life.

Then there was a pot of manna that the LORD fed them with during the time of wandering forty years in the wilderness. Again that speaks of Jesus Christ. He said He was the **true** bread from heaven.

Finally, were the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 4:13). John said that Jesus Christ was the Word of God. This was the word of God in there. We have these three symbols inside of it. Normally this thing was kept in the Holy Place and visited only once a year on the Day of Atonement by the high priest to atonement for the sins of the people and meet the LORD hovering over the Mercy Seat where those cherubim met for that atonement.

Jericho Destroyed

Now, let's move on to Joshua 6:14-21.

[14] ... they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: they did [so] six days.

By the way, there's been a whole lot of sevens (perhaps you noticed) in this text so far. *Six* and *seven* are sort of big. The way we tell time often has to do with circles. My watch has hands that move in a circles. If you think of time being like a circle, the earth rotating on its axis and revolving around the sun, the moon orbiting the earth, these are all circles. Can there be some symbolism here? Why was God having them go around six and then seven times?

A key point of this whole scenario was that God waited 400 plus years for these people to repent. They never did. It's interesting to me if you take six and multiply it by seven and add a zero to the end you get 420, which is about the amount of time the LORD waited. Maybe this is what He was saying:

I've waited; I've waited; I've waited, and you didn't repent.

That's speculation on my part, but it's interesting to think about.

I went to the Capitol and tried to reproduce this going around one time with the single square, so I went around and doubled back to duplicate going around two adjacent copies of it. It took me thirteen minutes. But they had half a million soldiers. To do that, the procession width would have been 1500 feet. The guy on the outer flank of this huge procession would have taken him about an hour instead of thirteen minutes to get around.

Joshua 6

[15] And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

[16] And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

[17] And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

We looked at that two times ago.

[18] And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

[19] But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

[20] So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

[21] And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

[24] And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

It's interesting here that the wall fell outward. Those two six-foot-thick walls twenty to twenty-six feet high. They fell outward. When they did, they filled in whatever was necessary in order to make a ramp. The Israelites had the place completely surrounded. It says that each man went straight up. In other words, as they were marching around they just turned and went up into the city because they had this ramp. And they just took the city and they **burned** it, it said.

Archaeologists have gone there and seen this stuff. Remember the text said that this was dedicated to the LORD. Do not take this as spoil. Normally they would take the grain. In this case, the archaeologists found pots of grain that were charred but not taken. Normally, they would have been taken. They were left there. So they found evidence of

two things the Bible said. It said to **leave** it, and it said to **burn** it. Both of those things were evidenced by the pots of grain.

Rahab the Harlot and Her Family Spared

Now let's see what happened to Rahab.

[22] But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.

[23] And the young men that were spies went in, and brought Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.

[25] And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwell[s] in Israel even unto this day;

That would be the day that the book of Joshua was written.
Why?

because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Joshua Cursed Jericho

We have two more verses in this chapter.

In verse 26 it says that Joshua cursed the city. If anyone rebuilt it, his oldest and youngest son would be killed in the process. That actually happened as recorded in I Kings 16:34. There's a record of a prophesy made and a prophesy fulfilled.

Joshua's fame spread throughout the Promised Land.

[27] So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

This impenetrable oasis paradise was decimated. Joshua quickly became famous.

Despite the oasis paradise Jericho had been, the city became a ruin. If you visit the area today, it looks like much of Israel – desolate. There are no palm trees, no fertile fields, no thriving city. It's a ruin that has been excavated.

Application

Jericho represents something similar to the state of man without God. Man started in a paradise even greater than Jericho. But like Jericho, man was overcome by sin and faced the judgment of God. That judgment included death and banishment from the garden. The garden was a paradise. He was banned from that.

The good news is that God provided a redeemer in Jesus Christ to rescue man. This is similar as He rescued Rahab from the destruction of Jericho. He's always there wanting and waiting to rescue people who will come to Him. Jesus Christ satisfied God's righteous judgment of man on the cross to set all

that believe free. Next time, the day after Christmas, we will review that glorious event when God sent His son named Jesus to save His people from their sins.

That salvation by grace through faith gives man a right standing with God and a new home in a walled city paradise far greater than any of us can even imagine. Let's look at that

It's interesting. This is a walled city, and the walls are **three time higher** than the walls of Jericho.

Revelation 21

[14] And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

[17] And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits,

That's 216 feet high.

according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

[19] And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.

Betsy has been watching all of these man-made stones they are making these days. It's quite interesting. They're making diamonds, sapphires, and everything else.

[23] And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Jesus is the light of the world. He will be the light of this city – the New Jerusalem.

[24] And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

[25] And the gates of it shall not be shut

Do you remember the turtle? Jericho was shut up. It's going to have all of these high walls, but the gates will be open!

at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

There's not going to be any night.

[26] And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

[27] And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defile[s], neither whatsoever work[s] abomination, or make[s] a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

That's the precious promise. That's where we're headed. We can be thankful that we have a glorious **paradise** to look forward to. In contrast to Jericho which was heathen and corrupt with the only known

commercial business was that of a harlot, this place will be without sin. It will be glorious.

Benediction

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

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