

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**June 26, 2011**

**God Is Victorious**

Joshua 6:2-3, 4b, 12-20b

**Key verse:** “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’” (Joshua 6:16).

It’s a funny story that has been told many times in many sermons, but it seems appropriate here as we explore the events described in Joshua 6: A young boy came home from Sunday School one day, and his mother asked him what he had learned. “Oh, I learned about the battle of Jericho,” he answered.

“Tell me about it,” the boy’s mother said.

“Well,” he answered, “the city had these huge, thick walls around it, and Joshua’s army couldn’t knock them down. So he brought in his air force. They bombed the city. And the walls came tumbling down.”

Surprised, the mother asked her son, “Is that really what your Sunday School teacher told you?”

“Naw,” said the boy. “But if I told you what she really said, you would never believe me.”

The people of Jericho must have been equally puzzled by what they saw when they looked down from their city’s walls. On that first day of the siege of Jericho, a strange procession encircled the city. Inside, the people were expecting Joshua’s army to attack Jericho. Instead, the army came marching in order. Armed guards led the procession. Next came the priests, blowing shofars, the ram’s-horn battle trumpets. Four of the priests carried, on poles resting on their shoulders, a box covered in blue cloth—the ark of the Lord. A rear guard followed the ark and the priests. Finally, the entire Israelite army marched behind. This huge procession encircled the city of Jericho once, and then returned to camp.

The next morning, the same procession filed by. Again, it encircled the city once, and then returned to camp. The same thing happened six mornings in row. Then, on the seventh day, the Israelite army marched not once but seven times around the city. A final trumpet blast was heard, and all the people shouted. “As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat” (Joshua 6:20).

The battle of Jericho had great significance for the Hebrew people. It was a special part of the story of how God delivered them from Egyptian slavery and

established them in the Promised Land. For Christ followers today, this story conveys some timeless spiritual truths, especially as we remember that for us, “our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

In the spiritual battles that we face, the battle of Jericho reminds us of these timeless truths: **1. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s.** **2. Our part in winning the victory requires faith and obedience.**

**1. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s.** As the army encircled Jericho each day, the ark of the Lord—representing God’s presence and power—was the centerpiece. At the center of Joshua’s battle plan was his conviction that the battle was the Lord’s.

At the end of Joshua 5, we read of Joshua’s encounter with “the commander of the army of the Lord,” probably an angel of God. Joshua asked him, “Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?” He replied, “Neither; but as a commander of the army of the Lord I have come” (5:13-15). With this seemingly non-committal answer, the angel was in effect saying: “It is not so much that God is taking your side, but rather you must take God’s side!”

In our lives, we must listen prayerfully to what God is saying to us, so that we will be able to follow His leadership. Too often, we choose battles not of God’s choosing, and we fail miserably. But when we are led by God’s Spirit, God will fight for us and with us. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s.

**2. Our part in winning the victory requires faith and obedience.** Before the siege of Jericho ever began, “The Lord said to Joshua, ‘See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers’” (6:2). On the seventh day of the siege, after the Israelites had encircled Jericho seven times and the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua spoke this word of faith: “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city” (6:16).

An important aspect of faith is a type of spiritual “seeing,” or discernment. When we walk in the Spirit, prayerfully and submissively seeking to be led by God, God lets us “see” the outcome of His work and our faithfulness. This seeing sometimes comes in the form of a quiet, inner assurance. God let Joshua “see” that He had “handed Jericho over” to him. Joshua then was called to believe what God had let him “see.” “Faith,” said the writer of Hebrews, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1).

Our part in winning the victory requires not only faith but also obedience. I do not know precisely why God asked the Israelites to encircle Jericho for seven days, or blow trumpets, or shout. Some have suggested that these activities were a kind of psychological warfare, causing fear and panic to spread among the people of Jericho. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote that these unusual

directions were given “to try the faith and obedience of the people: whether they would observe a precept, which to human policy seemed foolish, and believe a promise, which seemed impossible to be performed.”

One thing I do know—when God’s people responded to God with faith and obedience, the walls of Jericho came tumbling down!

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