

The Capture of Jericho

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We come to the sixth chapter of the Book of Joshua. This chapter contains the story of the capture of the city of Jericho, and is one more chapter in the story of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus as represented by the ark of the covenant. You will notice that the ark is the most conspicuous thing in this story, for it is mentioned eight times in the chapter. We will not make much of that number, but perhaps you know that the number eight in the Bible is the symbol of resurrection, and in this chapter we are over Jordan and on resurrection ground.

This chapter, then, represents the great transition from one ground to another, and it very powerfully represents the new ground of resurrection life. An impressive thing is that it marks a big change in the life of God's own people - not the change from not being God's people to becoming God's people, but a great transition in the life of His people.

We look back to the ground which they had already held. They had had an experience of redemption from the world and the prince of this world, for Egypt represents the power of this world in which these people were at one time, but by the power of God they had been separated from that world and its power. Most of you know the story of the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the one point upon which we will put our finger is the completeness of that separation according to the mind of God. Note that it is according to God's mind. The whole of His mind did not become actual in them, but here is God's mind, which was, and still is, that His people shall be absolutely separated from the power of this world.

That is illustrated for us by the ten judgments which God poured upon the Egyptians. Time after time God struck tremendous blows at that which tried to keep His people in bondage. At last that great power began to weaken, and tried to get the people on to the ground of compromise. Pharaoh said: 'Just go three days' journey into the wilderness.' He meant: 'Don't go altogether out of my reach. Don't put too great a distance between yourselves and my power.' But the Lord said: 'No! None of that!' And then Pharaoh said: 'Well, let the men go and leave the women and children behind.' I don't know what kind of men Pharaoh thought they were, but the Lord knew what kind of man Pharaoh was, and He said: 'No! I will not have one single hoof of one single animal left in Egypt.' The mind of the Lord was absolute separation from this world and its authority. There was the great care of the Lord for these people. He had said to Moses: 'I have heard the cry of My people and have seen their distress.'

The Lord's desire to have His people completely separated is because He loves them. I think a lot of people, especially young people, have the idea that this teaching about separation is something that is not very happy. You have to give up the world, and you have to give up this... that... and the other thing. If you come out to be the Lord's people you are going to lose a lot. But this separation of Israel was an expression of the Lord's love and care for them. Our deliverance from this world and its power is because God loves us: and He wanted to give His people something better than ever they had had in Egypt.

Now you ask any true Christian about this and hear what they have to say! 'Yes, we as the Lord's people have really had to suffer many things. The way has not always been easy, and sometimes it has been very hard, but if you ask us whether we would rather have the world than the Lord and what He has given us, we would have no hesitation in giving you an answer. The Lord's love for us means more than anything else.'

Here, then, you have the mind of the Lord, the love of the Lord, and then you have the power of the Lord. It is a mighty thing that the Lord has done to make us His people!

Now let it be understood that we shall never get very far until this complete separation has been made. We have to remember that this is the way that the Lord Jesus went. He has gone right through all the difficulties, the sufferings and the sorrows, to the Father in glory, and the Father has filled Him with His heavenly fullness. The Father has answered His prayer. The Lord Jesus had prayed: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5), and that prayer has been fully answered. But on what ground was that prayer answered?

We have to go back to that temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. The prince of this world (that was the Lord's own name for Satan. He said "the prince of this world cometh" - John 14:30) came to Him and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and said to Him: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:9,10). Jesus refused all the kingdoms of this world at the hands

of Satan, and got them at the hands of His Father. Jesus fought this fundamental battle with the prince of this world. He refused to acknowledge Satan and his claims. It was a complete break with the prince of this world, and because of that He could go through to the glory.

Now Israel was called upon to take that position. That was the mind of God for them, but they failed to live up to it in the wilderness. Although they were positionally out of Egypt, they were not out conditionally. Or we can put that in another way: they were positionally out of Egypt, but Egypt was not out of them, so in the wilderness they failed to reach God's full mind for them.

Are you beginning to see the meaning of Jericho? They had come through the Jordan on to a new ground, and that new ground had come into them. It was the new ground of perfect harmony with the mind of God, and the first thing on the new ground was Jericho. Jericho was the full embodiment of this perfect purpose of God.

What is the dominant number of Jericho? It is number seven. You notice that Jericho was the gateway to the seven nations that were going to be overthrown. Then it was seven priests who were to take up the ark - that is, who were to take up the testimony of the greatness and glory of Christ. These seven priests were to have seven trumpets. Every one of them had a trumpet. This was a band of seven instruments. They were to go round Jericho seven times - once every day, but on the seventh day they were to go round seven times. You see what a prominent place this number seven had? Seven nations, seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, and seven times on the seventh day.

Of course, a lot of you know the meaning of Bible numbers. I only have to remind you that seven is the number of what is spiritually complete, the fullness of what is spiritual. It is spiritual life from the dead, and is the fullness of spiritual power by resurrection. The ark here is the testimony to Christ's full victory and dominion. You see, everything in this story is at a discount except the ark. The only thing that is in power here is the ark. You may say that these seven nations are very strong, but before the ark they are as nothing. This ark is going to lead the way to a complete victory over them all. The greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus makes everything else as nothing.

Look at the people! And look at what they were told to do and what they were told not to do! I wonder what any general would say today if you told him to go to war like this! If you said: 'Now, look, here is this nation that you have to overcome', or 'Here are seven nations that you have to overcome. All you have to do is just to walk round quietly and blow your little trumpets. You do not have to draw any sword or fire one shot. You just go walking round quietly and let seven men blow trumpets. After you have done this for one week just shout, and it is all over.' I am glad that you smile, for it is so ridiculous, is it not? Perhaps some of the people on the wall of Jericho just looked down and laughed at these people, saying: 'Well, you just go on walking round for ever. Nothing will happen!'

What I am trying to say is this. This is a picture of human weakness, of human foolishness, of human nothingness. Do you remember what Paul said to the Corinthians? "God chose the foolish things of the world... the weak things... the things that are despised... and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27,28). Everything here at Jericho speaks of that human weakness and foolishness... at least, everything but one thing - and that was the ark. The ark was a symbol of the greatness and glory of Christ, and Christ is perfectly capable of overthrowing all the other powers in this universe.

But before I come to the conclusion, let me emphasize one thing. Before that ark could manifest its power the Lord's people had to be on special ground, what is called in the New Testament 'heavenly ground'. This spiritual separation from the power of this world is essential to know the power of Christ. We have pointed out that the passage of the Jordan represented a separation from all self-sufficiency, and a standing on the ground where Christ, and Christ only, is our life and our sufficiency. This truth runs right through the New Testament. The Apostle Paul said: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (1 Corinthians 12:9). That is the great principle in the New Testament Christian life. The Lord has to empty us of our own self-strength. Before ever He can fill us with His strength He has to empty us of our own wisdom and make us feel that we are very foolish people, in order that His wisdom may be manifested in our lives. He has to bring us to nothing in order that He may be everything. That is the meaning of Jericho. This is laid down as the foundation of the whole conquest of the land. If you are uncertain of that, you will soon see that if they just departed from that principle they were defeated. For the power, the greatness and the glory of Christ to rest upon us we must have no power, no greatness and no glory of our own.

Do not make any mistake about it. This is not a negative life. It is only negative where we in our own lives are concerned, but it is very positive where the Lord is concerned, for it is a life of the positive power of God.

I am going to finish where I began: It is a matter of our absolute committal to the Lord. In a gathering like this there are always four kinds of people. There are those who have never come out of Egypt and started on the way with the Lord, and we are very glad to have unsaved people with us for often they get saved. That has happened in more than one of these conferences, and I am told that it has already happened in this conference - some who were not on the road with Christ are now on that road. However, there are still those who have not started on the road, who have not given their lives to the Lord Jesus, and I hope that this conference will not finish before they have done so. That is one class of people.

A second class contains those whose position is a mixture of Egypt and the wilderness; I mean, a mixture of the world and Christianity. It says in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus: "The children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth and a mixed multitude went up also with them" (verses 37, 38). Apparently there had been mixed marriages, between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and these people who were neither one thing nor the other went out with Israel. They were a multitude of those who were neither one thing nor the other. They had some of the world, and some of Christianity, and it may be that there are some people like that here tonight.

Then there are some belonging to a third class: those who have come out of Egypt, or are out of the world, on the ground of the Blood of the Lamb. They are the people who believe in the fundamentals of Christianity. They believe that Jesus died for them and their sins, that His precious Blood was shed for them, and that He is their Saviour. They have accepted Him by faith, but that is as far as they have got. They have just accepted the first things of the life in Christ. They believe in all the truths about Him: that He is the Divine Son of God, that He was born of the virgin Mary, that He lived a perfect life on this earth, that He was crucified and died, that He was raised from the dead, and that He is coming again. They believe all those things - but they believed them long years ago and have never moved further than that. Israel were like that in the wilderness, and went on like that for forty years. In effect, they just lived there for a whole lifetime and never went on further than that with the Lord. Perhaps there is that class here tonight. You have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, have taken Him by faith as your Saviour, and now you go to church every Sunday and read your Bible and pray every day. You do other things that are expected of you because you are a Christian, but your Christian life is just a daily routine like that, and if you were asked about your Christian life you would say: 'Oh, I was saved ten... twenty... thirty years ago.' There are multitudes of Christians like that! They form a very large category.

But then there is this fourth class: those who, like the people who went over Jordan, are going right through with the Lord to all the fullness of His purpose. They realize that this Christian life is a warfare, and, like these people over Jordan, they are going right on in the warfare until the final victory is won. Are you a Jericho Christian? Or are you a half-Egypt Christian? Or a half self-life Christian? Or are you a one hundred percent the Lord's Christian? Can you say with the Apostle Paul: "One thing I do... I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"?

The Lord Jesus said there would be these four kinds of people. He put it into one of His parables - the parable of the Sower, who went forth to sow. One part of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came and took it away. Another part of the seed fell upon stony ground, and another part fell amongst thorns. All those three classes never came to fulfil the purpose of the sower. The devil did not have very much difficulty with some of them, for he could just come and snatch away the seed. They were not very careful about this matter. Then the cares and the affairs of this life, like thorns and thistles, swallowed up another part. The business and the pleasures of this world were more important to those people than the Word of God. Three categories never realized the purpose, and out of the four categories only one produced the result that the sower required, and that fourth class brought forth fruit "some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty". To which class do we belong? Are we determined that the Great Sower shall have all that He intended to have? That is Jericho: spiritual fullness, and all that will satisfy the Lord.