

THE TAKING OF JERICHO

Joshua 6

The crossing of the Jordan should be briefly reviewed and compared with the crossing of the Red Sea; and the setting up of the stones at Gilgal, the celebration of the Passover, and the ceasing of the manna should be noted. Teachers should have read the first five chapters of Joshua in order to be sure of this background.

Doctrinal Points

All good and truth are in the Lord alone. To acknowledge this from the heart is the first essential of a regenerate life. It is always the Lord who conquers for us in temptation.

We must be persistent as well as sincere in our efforts to do right.

Notes for Parents

In our course we pass over the book of Deuteronomy, whose name means “the second law,” or the repetition of the law. It is a summing up—through Moses shortly before his death—of the laws which had been given to him for the people, together with a reminder of all the Lord had done for them and a solemn charge to them to keep the law that they might live and prosper, blessed and protected by the Lord—a charge to choose life and good instead of death and evil.

Moses, as we read in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, was permitted to see the Promised Land toward which he had been leading the people, but not to enter it. He was led up to the top of Mount Nebo near their final camp, and there the Lord showed him the whole land spread out below him. Then he died.

He was succeeded by Joshua, who had been his aide throughout the wilderness journey and the leader of Israel’s army whenever there was a battle. You have read with the children the Lord’s solemn charge to Joshua when he was given command. Joshua fulfilled

this charge, and under him the Israelites conquered the Holy Land, were assigned their places in it by lot, and settled in their new homes. This is the story covered by the book of Joshua.

The Jordan River was parted by the Lord for their crossing just as the Red Sea had been, the power of the Lord being this time manifested through the ark which contained the stone tables inscribed with the commandments by the finger of God. Then the people made their camp at Gilgal not far from the strong city of Jericho. There they celebrated the Passover in token of thanksgiving, and there the daily gift of the manna ceased, since they were now able to eat “the old corn of the land.”

Then we have our story for today, the striking story of the fall of Jericho. This miracle was performed by the Lord to impress upon the people at the very beginning of their conquest the fact that all their power to conquer was from the Lord and not from themselves. If they obeyed Him, they would always be victorious. If they disobeyed, they would fail. This was later proved to them many times.

The lesson for us all is easy to see. We all hope to find our homes at last in the Promised Land—in heaven. This land is waiting within us to be conquered, but because of our inherited selfishness, it can be won only by a long struggle. The enemies in the land are our natural tendencies to evil. The walled cities are the wrong ideas built up to defend these evils. Of ourselves we could never break down the walls of falsity and overcome our temptations. But if we follow the ark—if we faithfully and persistently keep the commandments, looking to the Lord for strength and trusting in Him—He will give us the victory.

Primary

Remind the children of what the ark was and what was contained, and tell the story of Jericho with emphasis on the power of the ark. But be sure to give the children an opportunity to tell what they know about Moses, the Passover, the wilderness journey, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna, and the ark with the commandments. It is a good lesson for review, and more will

be obtained from the story of Jericho if it comes as a climax.

The people had camped near the river at a place called Gilgal and celebrated the feast of the Passover to mark their thanksgiving to the Lord for delivering them from slavery and bringing them back to the Promised Land. Then they prepared to attack the first city which stood in the way of their progress into the land. This was a strong city surrounded by a great wall.

What was the name of this city?

Did the Lord tell Joshua to attack the city of Jericho?

What were they to carry around the city each day for six days?

Who were to go ahead of the ark?

What were they to do on the seventh day?

When Joshua finally told the people to shout, what happened?

All the gold, silver, brass, and iron which they found in Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord.

Everything and everybody else was to be destroyed, except a woman named Rahab and her family.

They were spared because Rahab had saved some of Joshua's men when they were sent ahead to spy out the city.

Jericho was burned to the ground, and a curse placed upon it. Read verse 26.

It was really the Lord who conquered Jericho for the Israelites, wasn't it? When we do as the Lord tells us to do, He will always help us.



Junior

In this class review is important. The teacher will find it helpful to prepare in advance a list of Bible references bearing on the events which lead up to this miracle. If there is time, have the children look up those they do not easily recall.

When the Israelites arrived at Gilgal, they set up twelve stones from the Jordan for a memorial at this place where they made their first camp in the Holy Land. There they also celebrated the Passover feast.

What did this feast commemorate?

The name Gilgal means "a rolling." Read Joshua 5:9 to see why it

was given this name. After this the manna, with which they had been fed for forty years in the wilderness, ceased; and they began to eat “the corn of the land.”

The first city which stood in the way of their possession of the Holy Land was Jericho. In a book called *On Holy Ground* the Rev. William L. Worcester writes: “In the Gospel days Jericho was a city standing back in the edge of the plain just where the brook Kelt and the road from Jerusalem come out from the hills. But the old Jericho of the time of Joshua was a mile further north. The fine spring called Elisha’s fountain is still there, coming out from the foot of a hill which is formed in part by the ruins of the old city. From this hill of ruins you look out over the broad plain; and behind it is a stern weather-beaten cliff with caves in which hermits live.” Jericho was the first walled city the Israelites had ever had to attack, and the Lord used it to teach the Israelites that it would always be His power and not their own strength which would give them victory. He told them just what they were to do.

What were they to carry around the city?

Who were to go ahead of the ark?

What were they to carry?

How many times a day were they to march around it for the first six days?

How many times were they to march around it on the seventh day?

Do you remember where the number seven first appears in the Bible?

As the Lord, in the allegory of Creation, labored for six days and then rested on the seventh, so the number six stands for our struggles with temptation and the number seven for the peaceful, happy, and holy state which follows victory over temptation. In the Bible, whenever one is commanded to do a thing seven times, it pictures perseverance in doing right until we have come to love the right. See how many times the number seven is used in the story of the fall of Jericho. With the Jews, after the commandments were given at Sinai and the two tables of stone on which the Lord had written them were placed in the ark, the Lord’s power was exercised through the ark, and you can easily see that this means for us that the Lord can always help us if we obey the commandments.

In chapter 2, which we have omitted, we are told that while the children of Israel were encamped at Shittim in the land of Moab, Joshua sent two men into the Holy Land to spy out Jericho. While they were in Jericho, these men became suspected and they would have been killed had not a woman named Rahab hidden them among the stalks of flax which she had piled up on her roof. Her house was built on the wall of the city, and after dark she let the two spies down by a rope through her window on the outside of the wall so that they could escape. They promised her that when Jericho was captured, she and all her family would be spared. Now we see that Joshua kept their promise. Tradition says that this Rahab was the Rachab mentioned in Matthew 1:5, who was an ancestress of David.

What was saved out of Jericho besides Rahab and her family?

What were these things to be used for?

What was done with everything else in the city?

What curse was put on the city?

Read I Kings 16:34 to see how this curse was fulfilled. There are two familiar stories in the New Testament in which Jericho also figures. Look up Luke 10:30 and 19:1-10. And read carefully verse 18 of our chapter for today, which you will want to remember when we come to our next lesson from the book of Joshua.



A Shofar, or Ram's Horn Trumpet

J. G. Wood in *Bible Animals* tells us: "The same instrument is used even at the present day in parts of the Jewish ritual. One of these instruments is now before me, and is shown in the accompanying illustration. In length it measures eighteen inches, i.e. a cubit, and it is formed entirely in one piece. As far as I can judge, it is made from the left horn of the broad-tailed sheep, which . . . is not spiral, but flattish, curved backwards, and forming nearly a circle . . . In order to bring it to the proper shape, the horn is softened by heat, and is then modelled into the very form which was used by the Jewish priests who blew the trumpet before the ark."

Intermediate

The correspondence of the story itself is important for this class, with emphasis on our constant need to guard against the thought that we of ourselves are able to win victories apart from obedience to the Lord and trust in Him.

In chapter 5 are described four important things connected with Gilgal, the first encampment of the Israelites in the Holy Land. First they set up the twelve stones taken from the bed of Jordan as memorial of their miraculous crossing. Then came the circumcision of all the males who entered the Holy Land. This, the Jewish equivalent of our baptism, represented purification and the dedication of their lives to the service of God. They had not observed this practice while they were wandering in the wilderness, and you perhaps remember that Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who had left Egypt as adults who were permitted to enter the Holy Land. Next the Passover was celebrated, to remind them at the very beginning of their conquest that they owed their freedom and success to the Lord. And finally the manna ceased to appear and they began to eat the fruits of the Holy Land itself—the “old corn of the land.” The manna represents the day-by-day sustenance which the Lord gives us during our period of reformation without our knowing just how it comes or doing anything ourselves to help produce it. This cannot be stored up or provided in advance of our need. When we begin the period of regeneration, however, we experience a spiritual satisfaction which we can understand and in some measure cultivate.

Jericho was the first city in the Holy Land which Israel had to conquer. A city is the symbol of a system of doctrine or belief. This first city in the Holy Land, in the plain of Jordan, represents in its good sense the simplest understanding of genuine truth necessary to spiritual living. Jericho was called the “city of palm trees,” and the palm tree pictures the principle that the Lord gives the victory. But Jericho in the hands of the enemy represents the denial of this principle, or our natural and strongly entrenched feeling that our power to understand and do right is in ourselves. Even after we enter the Holy Land we find clinging to us false ideas

and points of view carried over from the time when we believed ourselves to be independent of the Lord. The recognition and overcoming of these remains of self-confidence and pride are pictured by the conquest of Jericho. Note that Jericho was to be utterly destroyed, only those things in it being saved which could be devoted to the service of the Lord.

The conquest of Jericho shows us the way in which our natural self-confidence is to be overcome. It is by persistently declaring to ourselves and confirming from the Word the truth that all our power comes from the Lord as we obey the commandments. The seven priests with the seven trumpets of ram's horn were to go before the ark around the city. A lamb represents innocence, or trust in the Lord. We associate the lamb with the kind of innocence which we find in little children before they begin to assert themselves. But if this quality is cherished and developed, it becomes a strong, beautiful trait of mature character which makes one want to protect and defend everything that is pure and good, and aid all people in the name of the Lord. The ram represents this strong kind of innocence, and his horns are the symbol of his power. When we "speak up" for the right against evil either in ourselves or in others, it is like blowing on a trumpet of ram's horn. Seven, the holy number, always pictures the fulfillment which comes after persistent struggle to do right. Only by steady determination to look to the Lord instead of to self can our natural selfish will be changed.

The curse on Jericho warns us against slipping back into former states. All through the Bible we are repeatedly taught that when we go back on any truth we have really acknowledged, we do ourselves lasting harm. This is what is called "profanation." The curse on Jericho was literally fulfilled (see I Kings 16:34).

Basic Correspondences

- Joshua = truth fighting
- a city = a system of doctrine
- Jericho = the simplest understanding of
the truth that everything is from

the Lord; and in a bad sense the
denial of this truth
the palm tree = the principle that victory over evil
comes from the Lord
the ram = innocence which has developed and
acquired strength
the trumpet of ram's horn = speaking up for the right

Senior

The whole sequence of events and their spiritual meaning should be carefully reviewed. The change from the period of reformation to that of regeneration is very important. Emphasis might also be placed on the command to preserve the gold and silver and other metals for the service of the Lord and to destroy everything else in the perverted city.

In chapter 2 of Joshua there is the incident of the spies sent by Joshua into Jericho before Israel crossed the Jordan. They were saved by Rahab the harlot, and they promised her that when Jericho fell, she and her family would be spared. We find in our chapter for today that Joshua fulfilled this promise. We note also that the silver and gold and the vessels of brass and iron which were found in Jericho were by the Lord's command saved and devoted to the Lord's service.

When we enter the Holy Land of spiritual living, the first enemy to be overcome is the false ideas about the Lord and spiritual things which we have in our minds. These cannot be overcome by our own power and intelligence, but only by looking to the Lord for direction and strength. This is pictured in the story of the fall of Jericho. We have probably been making preparation for this conquest ourselves, although we may not have recognized it as such. The story of the spies and the command in regard to the metals of Jericho describe part of this preparation. They teach us that the possibilities for good in our natural selfishness must be sought out and saved even when we fully surrender our wills to the Lord's guidance. Swedenborg tells us that there is a type of care for self and a type of self-controlled action and judgment which are good,

that care which impels us to develop our capabilities for the purpose of more adequately serving the Lord and the neighbor and that we may study and understand better the Lord's teaching for the sake of obeying intelligently. The spies sent forward to explore Jericho, like those earlier sent by Moses to explore the Holy Land—of whom, we remember, Joshua himself was one—picture our thoughts which go forward and explore the possibilities of regeneration before regeneration actually takes place. The story of Rahab the harlot teaches us to remember that what seems outwardly bad may be inwardly good. We learn in our chapter that not only was Rahab saved but that she continued to dwell among the Israelites. Tradition says that she is the same person (Rachab or Rahab) mentioned in Matthew 1:5 as an ancestress of David. We should, of course, seek to live outwardly orderly lives, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Other preparations for the conquest were the setting up of the stones at Gilgal as a reminder of the Lord's aid (Joshua 4:1-3, 20) and the several incidents described in chapter 5. There we are told that at Gilgal all the males were circumcised, the Jewish symbol of purification and dedication to the Lord, corresponding to our baptism; the Passover was celebrated, the memorial of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt; and on the day after the Passover they began to eat the produce of the land and the manna ceased, picturing a new type of spiritual nourishment, in the production of which we cooperate with the Lord voluntarily. All the incidents inspire and strengthen the new willingness to trust in the Lord, and the conquest of Jericho itself completes the series.

This conquest was accomplished without a struggle on the part of Israel. The ark pictures obedience to the commandments; the trumpets of ram's horn, the voice of the Lord speaking with the power of unselfish love; and the reiteration of the number seven, perseverance in obedience until the holy state of willing service is reached. Then the people were told to shout with a great shout, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat. That is, by this persistent obedience we come into conjunction with the Lord and the walls

built up within us by our natural self-esteem and self-love fall down flat, so that we can enter the city “every man straight before him.” We are reminded of the fifth Psalm, so familiar to us as part of our morning service: “Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.” A more detailed study of the fall of Jericho will be found in the quotation from the *Apocalypse Explained* below.

Adult

In this lesson the emphasis should be on the necessity of recognizing that all goodness and truth and all power to do right are from the Lord alone. This recognition is a constant factor in regenerate living, and without it there is no regeneration. No matter how orderly and benevolent and even religious the outward life may be, if we cling to feelings of self-esteem we have not even conquered Jericho.

The occupation of the Holy Land represents the achievement of truly spiritual living, in which the crossing of the Jordan and the taking of Jericho represent the first steps. It is hard for many people to see the difference between spiritual and natural living, especially if the natural living is charitable and orderly. Natural living is living for the pleasures and satisfactions of this life, even though these may not be merely physical enjoyments. There may even be recognition and worship of the Lord, but from a principle of obedience only, with hope of reward and fear of the consequences of evil as the principal motives in obeying. Spiritual living is living in conscious knowledge of the Lord and His purposes, substituting eternal for temporal values, trying to make and keep the mind and heart as well as the outward conduct pure in the sight of the Lord. For example, the natural man is likely to look upon his troubles in this world as sent by the Lord for his chastening, upon death as a calamity, upon success as measured in terms of the good things of this world, upon worship as a duty, upon those who injure him as his enemies and those who favor him as his friends. This is because he does not live in spiritual light. The spiritual man looks upon his troubles as opportunities for seeing

and conquering his own evils, upon death as an orderly and happy step, upon success as measured in terms of the ability to help others, upon worship as a privilege, upon those who injure him and those who favor him alike as the Lord's children whom he should help to do right and, where possible, turn from wrongdoing. The natural man is content with general knowledge about the Lord, while the spiritual man loves to learn more and more. The natural man sets an orderly external life as his goal, but the spiritual man examines himself for deeper evils and tries to overcome them.

To become spiritual one must be born again, born of the spirit. Swedenborg says: "Before regeneration man acts from obedience; but after regeneration from affection." (AC 8505) A familiar hymn expresses this desire to become spiritual: "Give us to think as angels think, and feel as angels feel." A good test to apply to our thoughts and feelings is just that: Can I imagine an angel thinking and feeling as I do now? The Lord expressed the difference in this way: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15)

The Lord intends us all to live spiritual lives, to attain the Holy Land of heavenly character, to live within its borders. But we are born with all sorts of inherited tendencies to evil and falsity. These are the hostile peoples which occupied the Holy Land and the walled cities which had to be taken. For example, let anyone try genuinely to love his enemy and he will immediately become conscious of the foes which are settled within himself. It is comparatively easy to learn not to strike back—worldly prudence and even common politeness will teach us that—but it is not so easy to learn not to feel injured, not to allow the mind to dwell on the injury, but instead to think of the one who has injured us as someone needing our help. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:36) We should accustom ourselves to thinking of all the evil peoples described in the Word as within ourselves—

not in somebody else. If we examine ourselves honestly, we shall soon pick out the “giants.” Our “walled cities” are entrenchments of false reasonings by which we seek to defend these evils. This will light up for us the story of the taking of Jericho.

First we come to the Jordan as the means of entrance to the Holy Land. This wonderful river, whose name means “descender,” rushing down from the snows of Hermon to lose itself finally in the Dead Sea, is in general a picture of the Lord’s truth in the Word, coming down from Him through the heavens and then through the minds of men in various states until it touches the lowest possible state of life. As a border of the Holy Land it pictures especially the simple truths which introduce us to the spiritual life, and when the land is filled with evil people and the Jordan seems to oppose the entrance of the conquering host, it pictures the perversions of truth, the falsities which would keep us from engaging in battle against our inner foes—such falsities as “I can’t help it; I was born that way,” and, “You can’t change human nature.”

It should be noted that when the people entered the Holy Land, the manna ceased (Joshua 5:10-12). *The Sower* (Vol. 2, p. 24) puts very simply what is meant by this: “The manna represents the strength from the Lord in times of trial. It does not represent the full satisfaction of a life that has become altogether heavenly. That satisfaction is represented by the Passover in Canaan and by the old corn of the land, and when the people had eaten of this, the manna ceased.” The occasional sense of spiritual satisfaction which we get during the process of reformation is merely a foretaste of the steady joy of heavenly living. People who live spiritually are happy with a deep, abiding happiness which no natural satisfaction can ever give. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11)

There were three elements in the Lord’s charge to Joshua (Joshua 1:6-9): (1) the cherishing of the law, (2) active, courageous attack upon the enemy, and (3) trust in the Lord’s power to save. These are wonderfully carried out in the story of the crossing of Jordan

and the conquest of Jericho. (1) It is the ark containing the commandments which leads the way across Jordan. The twelve stones from the Jordan, representing all the introductory truths, are set up for a memorial at Gilgal; the ark goes before the people as they compass the city of Jericho. (2) The priests bearing the ark are commanded to go forward straight into the river, and the river does not part until the feet of the priests have touched it. The sevenfold marching around Jericho represents a complete examination of the falsities which defend our inner evils. (3) The Jordan is parted by a miracle. The people are commanded to celebrate the Passover, the memorial of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Seven priests with seven trumpets of ram's horn, signifying the power of divine truth from divine good, are to go before the ark when they compass Jericho. Jericho is delivered to them by a miracle.

The conquest of Jericho in general represents the change from a feeling that we can indulge our evils with impunity to a sense that we are safe only in the care of the Lord. Jericho was called the "city of palm trees," and the palm is the symbol of the principle that salvation is from the Lord alone. This is the first lesson we must learn if we are to live spiritually. The sense of self-sufficiency, the tendency of self-esteem, the pride of self-intelligence—which are deeply entrenched within each one of us from our natural inheritance—must be recognized and overcome before we can go forward to face and root out our other evils and find our true homes in the heavenly land of promise. For the detailed correspondence of the story of the fall of Jericho, read the passage from *Apocalypse Explained* below.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained, n. 700 d: "The 'city of Jericho' signifies instruction in the knowledges of good and truth, by which a man is brought into the church; for Jericho was a city not far from the Jordan, and that river signified introduction into the church. For all places in the land of Canaan were significative of things celestial and spiritual belonging to the church, and this from most

ancient times; and as the sons of Israel were to represent the church, and among them the Word was written, in which those places were to be mentioned signifying such things as are of heaven and the church, the sons of Israel were brought into it, and their introduction was signified by ‘the river Jordan,’ and their instruction by ‘Jericho.’ And as ‘Jericho’ signified instruction it signified also good of life, because unless one is in good of life he cannot be instructed in truths of doctrine. But when the land of Canaan was held by idolatrous nations the signification of the places and cities in that land was changed into the opposite, Jericho then signifying the profanation of truth and good. From this it follows that the ‘city’ itself signified the doctrine of falsity and evil, which perverted and profaned the truths and goods of the church, its ‘wall’ signifying falsities of evil defending that doctrine, and the ‘inhabitants’ those who are profane; and as all profaneness is from infernal love after acknowledgment of truth and good, the city was burned with fire, the inhabitants given to the curse, and its wall overthrown, ‘fire’ signifying infernal love, ‘curse’ a total blotting out, and ‘the overthrow of the wall’ exposure to evil and falsity. The sounding of the trumpets by the priests signified the proclamation of Divine truth from Divine good; the shouting and acclamation of the people signified consent and confirmation; compassing of the city signified a survey of falsity and evil and their dispersion by an influx of Divine truth from the Lord; this influx was signified by carrying the ark about it. The priests were seven in number, and the city was compassed seven days, seven times on the seventh day, to signify what is holy, and the holy proclamation of Divine truth, ‘seven’ signifying holiness, and in the contrary sense profaneness, and as there was holiness on the one part and profaneness on the other, there were seven priests with seven trumpets, and the city was compassed seven times. The gold, the silver, and vessels of brass and iron, were put into the treasury of the house of Jehovah, because these signified knowledges of spiritual and natural truth and good, ‘gold and silver’ knowledges of spiritual truth and good, which with those who profane are changed into dreadful falsities and evils; but as they continue to be knowledges, although adapted to evils, they are serviceable to the good by application to what is good, and therefore these things were put into the treasury of the house of Jehovah.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What river separated the Israelites from the Holy Land? *Jordan*
- J. How did they cross it? *miracle*
- J. Where was their first camp in the Holy Land? *Gilgal*

- P. What feast did they celebrate there? *Passover*
- J. What change was made in their food? *manna ceased*
- P. What was the first strong city they had to conquer? *Jericho*
- P. What did the Lord tell them to carry around the city? *the ark*
- P. How many priests were to go before the ark? *seven*
- J. What were they to carry? *ram's horn trumpets*
- P. How many times were they to march around the city each day for six days?
once
- P. How many times were they to march around it on the seventh day? *seven*
- P. What happened when they finally blew the trumpets and shouted?
walls fell
- J. What did they save out of the city? *Rahab and family, all metals*
- J. What did they do with everything else in it? *destroyed it*
- J. What curse was pronounced against Jericho? *rebuilder will lose two sons*
- I. What does entrance into the Holy Land represent? *beginning regenerate life*
- S. What does Jericho represent? *natural self-confidence*
- S. Why did the Lord overcome Jericho in this way? *to show that such tendencies can only be conquered by the Lord's power*