

The Destruction of Jericho (c. May 1406 BC)

Joshua 5:13–6:27

Jesus—The Commander of the LORD’s Army

5:13 When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him holding a drawn sword. Joshua approached him and asked him, “Are you on our side or allied with our enemies?”

14 He answered, “Truly I am the commander of the LORD’s army. Now I have arrived!” Joshua bowed down with his face to the ground and asked, “What does my master want to say to his servant?”

15 The commander of the LORD’s army answered Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you stand is holy.” Joshua did so.

6:1 Now Jericho was shut tightly because of the Israelites. No one was allowed to leave or enter.

2 The LORD told Joshua, “See, I am about to defeat Jericho for you, along with its king and its warriors.

3 Have all the warriors march around the city one time; do this for six days.

4 Have seven priests carry seven rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day march around the city seven times, while the priests blow the horns.

5 When you hear the signal from the ram’s horn, have the whole army give a loud battle cry. Then the city wall will collapse and the warriors should charge straight ahead.”

The First Day of Walking

6 So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and instructed them, “Pick up the ark of the covenant, and seven priests must carry seven rams’ horns in front of the ark of the LORD.”

7 And he told the army, “Move ahead and march around the city, with armed troops going ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

8 When Joshua gave the army its orders, the seven priests carrying the seven rams’ horns before the LORD moved ahead and blew the horns as the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed behind.

9 Armed troops marched ahead of the priests blowing the horns, while the rear guard followed along behind the ark blowing rams’ horns.

10 Now Joshua had instructed the army, “Do not give a battle cry or raise your voices; say nothing until the day I tell you, ‘Give the battle cry.’ Then give the battle cry!”

11 So Joshua made sure they marched the ark of the LORD around the city one time. Then they went back to the camp and spent the night there.

The Second Day of Walking

12 Bright and early the next morning Joshua had the priests pick up the ark of the LORD.

13 The seven priests carrying the seven rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD marched along blowing their horns. Armed troops marched ahead of them, while the rear guard followed along behind the ark of the LORD blowing rams’ horns.

14a They marched around the city one time on the second day, then returned to the camp.

The Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Days of Walking

14b They did this six days in all.

The Seventh Day—“Shout, for the LORD has given you the city”

15 On the seventh day they were up at the crack of dawn and marched around the city as before—only this time they marched around it seven times.

16 The seventh time around, the priests blew the rams’ horns and Joshua told the army, “Give the battle cry, for the LORD is handing the city over to you!

17 The city and all that is in it must be set apart for the LORD, except for Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house, because she hid the spies we sent.

18 But be careful when you are setting apart the riches for the LORD. If you take any of it, you will make the Israelite camp subject to annihilation and cause a disaster.

19 All the silver and gold, as well as bronze and iron items, belong to the LORD. They must go into the LORD’s treasury.”

The Fall of Jericho

20 The rams’ horns sounded and when the army heard the signal, they gave a loud battle cry. The wall collapsed and the warriors charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. [[Heb 11:30](#)]

21 They annihilated with the sword everything that breathed in the city, including men and women, young and old, as well as cattle, sheep, and donkeys.

22 Joshua told the two men who had spied on the land, “Enter the prostitute’s house and bring out the woman and all who belong to her as you promised her.”

23 So the young spies went and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her

whole family and took them to a place outside the Israelite camp.

24 But they burned the city and all that was in it, except for the silver, gold, and bronze and iron items they put in the treasury of the LORD's house.

25 Yet Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her. She lives in Israel to this very day because she hid the messengers Joshua sent to spy on Jericho. [[Heb 11:31](#)]

Joshua's Curse

26 At that time Joshua made this solemn declaration: "The man who attempts to rebuild this city of Jericho will stand condemned before the LORD. He will lose his firstborn son when he lays its foundations and his youngest son when he erects its gates!" [cf. [1 Kgs 16:34](#)]

27 The LORD was with Joshua and he became famous throughout the land.

The Sin of Achan (c. May/June 1406 BC)

Joshua 7

The First Attack on Ai

1 But the Israelites disobeyed the command about the city's riches. Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, stole some of the riches. The LORD was furious with the Israelites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai (which is located near Beth Aven, east of Bethel) and instructed them, "Go up and spy on the land." So the men went up and spied on Ai.

3 They returned and reported to Joshua, "Don't send the whole army. About two or three thousand men are adequate to defeat Ai. Don't tire out the whole army, for Ai is small."

4 So about three thousand men went up, but they fled from the men of Ai.

5 The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of them and chased them from in front of the city gate all the way to the fissures and defeated them on the steep slope. The people's courage melted away like water.

Joshua Panics

6 Joshua tore his clothes; he and the leaders of Israel lay face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD until evening and threw dirt on their heads.

7 Joshua prayed, "O, Master, LORD! Why did you bring these people across the Jordan to hand us over to the Amorites so they could destroy us?"

8 If only we had been satisfied to live on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say now that Israel has retreated before its enemies?"

9 When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will turn against us and destroy the very memory of us from the earth. What will you do to protect your great reputation?"

Sin in the Camp

10 The LORD responded to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying there face down?"

11 Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenantal commandment! They have taken some of the riches; they have stolen them and deceitfully put them among their own possessions.

12 The Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; they retreat because they have become subject to annihilation. I will no longer be with you, unless you destroy what has contaminated you.

13 Get up! Ritually consecrate the people and tell them this: 'Ritually consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, because the LORD God of Israel says, "You are contaminated, O Israel! You will not be able to stand before your enemies until you remove what is contaminating you."

14 In the morning you must approach in tribal order. The tribe the LORD selects must approach by clans. The clan the LORD selects must approach by families. The family the LORD selects must approach man by man.

15 The one caught with the riches must be burned up along with all who belong to him, because he violated the LORD's covenant and did such a disgraceful thing in Israel."

Achan's Sin is Revealed

16 Bright and early the next morning Joshua made Israel approach in tribal order and the tribe of Judah was selected.

17 He then made the clans of Judah approach and the clan of the Zerahites was selected. He made the clan of the Zerahites approach and Zabdi was selected.

18 He then made Zabdi's family approach man by man and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was selected.

19 So Joshua said to Achan, "My son, honor the LORD God of Israel and give him praise! Tell me what you did; don't hide anything from me!"

20 Achan told Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel in this way:

21 I saw among the goods we seized a nice robe from Babylon, two hundred silver pieces, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels. I wanted them, so I took them. They are hidden in the ground right in the middle of my tent with the silver underneath.”

22 Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent. The things were hidden right in his tent, with the silver underneath.

23 They took it all from the middle of the tent, brought it to Joshua and all the Israelites, and placed it before the LORD.

Achan’s Entire Family is Destroyed

24 Then Joshua and all Israel took Achan, son of Zerah, along with the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, ox, donkey, sheep, tent, and all that belonged to him and brought them up to the Valley of Disaster.

25 Joshua said, “Why have you brought disaster on us? The LORD will bring disaster on you today!” All Israel stoned him to death. (They also stoned and burned the others.)

26 Then they erected over him a large pile of stones (it remains to this very day) and the LORD’s anger subsided. So that place is called the Valley of Disaster to this very day.

The Destruction of Ai (c. June 1406 BC)

Joshua 8

Preparations for the Second Attack on Ai

1 The LORD told Joshua, “Don’t be afraid and don’t panic! Take the whole army with you and march against Ai! See, I am handing over to you the king of Ai, along with his people, city, and land.

2 Do to Ai and its king what you did to Jericho and its king, except you may plunder its goods and cattle. Set an ambush behind the city!”

3 Joshua and the whole army marched against Ai. Joshua selected thirty thousand brave warriors and sent them out at night.

4 He told them, “Look, set an ambush behind the city. Don’t go very far from the city; all of you be ready!

5 I and all the troops who are with me will approach the city. When they come out to fight us like before, we will retreat from them.

6 They will attack us until we have lured them from the city, for they will say, ‘They are retreating from us like before.’ We will retreat from them.

7 Then you rise up from your hiding place and seize the city. The LORD your God will hand it over to you.

8 When you capture the city, set it on fire. Do as the LORD says! See, I have given you orders.”

The Ambush is Set

9 Joshua sent them away and they went to their hiding place west of Ai, between Bethel and Ai. Joshua spent that night with the army.

10 Bright and early the next morning Joshua gathered the army, and he and the leaders of Israel marched at the head of it to Ai.

11 All the troops that were with him marched up and drew near the city. They camped north of Ai on the other side of the valley.

12 He took five thousand men and set an ambush west of the city between Bethel and Ai.

13 The army was in position—the main army north of the city and the rear guard west of the city. That night Joshua went into the middle of the valley.

The Trap is Sprung

14 When the king of Ai saw Israel, he and his whole army quickly got up the next day and went out to fight Israel at the meeting place near the Arabah. But he did not realize men were hiding behind the city.

15 Joshua and all Israel pretended to be defeated by them and they retreated along the way to the desert.

16 All the reinforcements in Ai were ordered to chase them; they chased Joshua and were lured away from the city.

17 No men were left in Ai or Bethel; they all went out after Israel. They left the city wide open and chased Israel.

18 The LORD told Joshua, “Hold out toward Ai the curved sword in your hand, for I am handing the city over to you.” So Joshua held out toward Ai the curved sword in his hand.

The Fall of Ai

19 When he held out his hand, the men waiting in ambush rose up quickly from their place and attacked. They entered the city, captured it, and immediately set it on fire.

20 When the men of Ai turned around, they saw the smoke from the city ascending into the sky and were so shocked they were unable to flee in any direction. In the meantime the men who were retreating to the desert turned against their pursuers.

21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the city was going up in smoke, they turned around and struck down the men of Ai.

22 At the same time the men who had taken the city came out to fight, and the men of Ai were trapped in the middle. The Israelites struck them down, leaving no survivors or refugees.

23 But they captured the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai who had chased them toward the desert (they all fell by the sword), all Israel returned to Ai and put the sword to it.
25 Twelve thousand men and women died that day, including all the men of Ai.
26 Joshua kept holding out his curved sword until Israel had annihilated all who lived in Ai.
27 But Israel did plunder the cattle and the goods of the city, in accordance with the LORD's orders to Joshua.
28 Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanently uninhabited mound (it remains that way to this very day).
29 He hung the king of Ai on a tree, leaving him exposed until evening. At sunset Joshua ordered that his corpse be taken down from the tree. They threw it down at the entrance of the city gate and erected over it a large pile of stones (it remains to this very day).

Joshua Carries Out Moses' Instructions (see Deut 27:1–8)

30 Then Joshua built an altar for the LORD God of Israel on Mount Ebal,
31 just as Moses the LORD's servant had commanded the Israelites. As described in the law scroll of Moses, it was made with uncut stones untouched by an iron tool. They offered burnt sacrifices on it and sacrificed tokens of peace.
32 There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua inscribed on the stones a duplicate of the law written by Moses.
33 All the people, rulers, leaders, and judges were standing on either side of the ark, in front of the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD. Both resident foreigners and native Israelites were there. Half the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and the other half in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the LORD's servant had previously instructed to them to do for the formal blessing ceremony.
34 Then Joshua read aloud all the words of the law, including the blessings and the curses, just as they are written in the law scroll.
35 Joshua read aloud every commandment Moses had given before the whole assembly of Israel, including the women, children, and resident foreigners who lived among them.

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