

# Faith Is The Victory:

## Bringing Down the Walls of Jericho

### Historical & Geographical Perspective

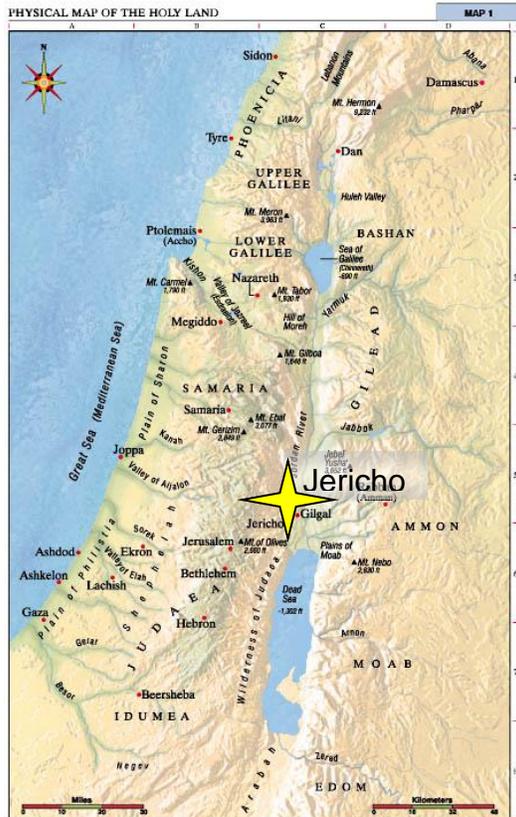


Figure 1: Physical Map of the Holy Land  
(<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/biblemaps/1>)

“Jericho was a Large oasis near the west bank of the Jordan river six miles north of the Dead Sea. Watered by several large springs, the "city of palms" is one of the oldest cultivated spots on earth, with settlements dating back to 9,000 BCE. At 825' below sea level [See Figure 2, next page] it is also the lowest city in the world. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem winds through the badlands of the Judean wilderness climbing more than 3,000 feet in less than 20 miles.

Although excavations have unearthed extensive evidence of settlements at Jericho before 1400 BCE, wind, water & centuries of farmers removed any remains of the city conquered by Joshua ca. 1200 BCE as well as later Israelite settlements. During the Persian period [6th-4th c. BCE] Jericho was cultivated as a plantation for aromatic balsam wood. The Hellenistic rulers of Syria again fortified the city ca. 200 BCE. Later Hasmonean rulers of Judea built a large Greek style palace there, which was leveled by Herod & replaced by a huge 25 acre palatial winter resort that mimicked the estates of Augustus in Rome. Herod also constructed a stadium [hippodrome] & other Roman monuments in the city. Thus, in the early 1st c. CE Jericho was at the height of its splendor. During the Jewish-Roman war [66-70 CE], Vespasian made Jericho a Roman military base.

Though not destroyed like Jerusalem or other centers of Jewish revolt, historic Jericho declined after the war & was eventually abandoned. The modern city was founded a mile to the east in the 5th c. CE.”<sup>1</sup>

## God’s Instructions, Israelites’ Execution

### God Prepares Joshua

God instructed Joshua that He would be with him in everything he does. “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life...I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5) These words, spoken to Joshua ages ago have application for us today. No matter the difficulty you are facing in your life, God “will not leave you nor forsake you”!

God further counseled the young man Joshua, “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9) We, too, must be “strong and of good courage” because God has promised to go with us and provide everything that we need “unto life and godliness.” (I Peter 1:3) Just as God prepared Joshua, he

<sup>1</sup> <http://virtualreligion.net/iho/jericho.html>

is preparing each one of us for great work in His kingdom as well if we will but accept His charge as Joshua did.

### Joshua Accepts God's Challenge, Instructs the Israelites

Joshua took God's counsel to heart and instructed the Israelites in what God had shared with him:

*"Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the Lord has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise." (Joshua 1:13-15)*

More importantly the Israelites took their instructions and, because of their faith in God's promises, took action. "So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

*17 Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. 18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage." (Joshua 1:16-18)*

### Spies Sent, Rahab Helps

In order to know more about the city they would be taking Joshua sends out two spies telling them, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." (Joshua 2:1) They lodged with a woman, Rahab the harlot, while doing this work. The king of Jericho became suspicious of these men and inquired of Rahab who the strangers were and what business they had in Jericho. Rahab lies to put the king off of their trail.

Rahab was never commended for her lies, even though her faith was commended by God in Hebrews 11:31. Despite having a sinful occupation she demonstrated her faith in God: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." (Joshua 2:9-12) Her actions spoke louder than her words. One can only speculate as to whether or not she continued her sinful practices once she was spared from the utter destruction in Jericho. (Joshua 6:25) Regardless of her past, her actions demonstrated her faith and it was accounted unto her for righteousness.

Because the spies were able to escape they bring their report back to Joshua. "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us" (Joshua 2:24)

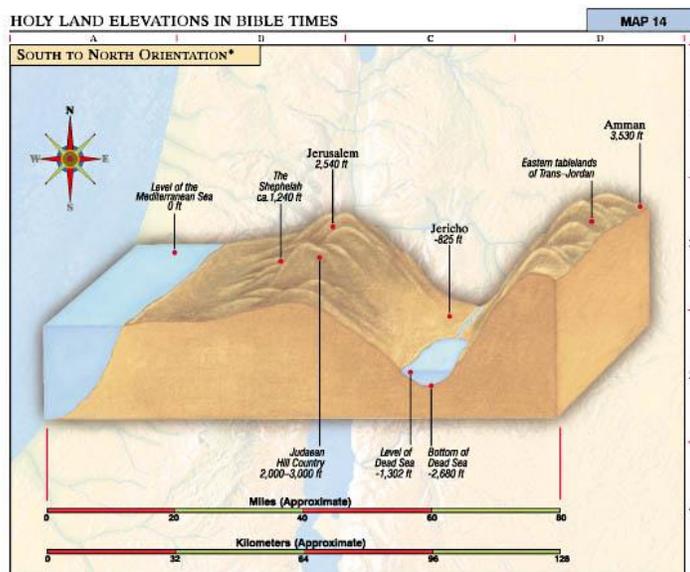


Figure 2: Holy Land Elevations In Bible Times  
(<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/biblemaps/14>)

### The Israelites Prepare To Reap God's Promise

Upon hearing the spies' report Joshua set about moving the people toward God's promised land. They camped on the east side of the Jordan River the night before. Joshua instructed the Israelites to sanctify themselves, "for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." The Ark of Covenant was taken by the priest before the people went across the Jordan River. Once they arrived there God stopped the waters of the river from flowing and the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River on dry ground just as the generation before them had crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. (Joshua 3:14-17)

This miracle was intended as a sign that God was with the Israelites. Joshua told the Israelites before they went, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites" (Joshua 3:10-13)

### God Instructs The Israelites To Build A Memorial

Once all of the people had crossed the river successfully, God instructed Moses to have one person from each of the twelve tribes take a stone from the river. These stones were made into a memorial of the wondrous work God had accomplished that day. We find here the purpose of memorials. "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever." (Joshua 4:21-24)

This memorial was to cause their children to ask about them and give them an opportunity to pass on God's great deed. We observe a similar memorial every first day of the week, the Lord's Supper. This memorial's purpose is two-fold: 1.) because we remember Christ death upon the cross for the remission of our sins, and 2.) so that we may proclaim Christ's death until he comes again. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

### The Men of War Are Circumcised, The Israelites Observe The Passover

All of the Israelites that came out of Egypt had died in the wilderness wanderings because they did not obey the voice of the Lord. Because of their wanderings the babies that were born, and were now of age to fight in battle, had not been circumcised. God commanded Joshua to have them circumcised and to observe the Passover feast. With this the Israelites are ready for battle!

### The Walls of Jericho

"The mound, or 'tell' of Jericho was surrounded by a great earthen rampart, or embankment, with a stone retaining wall at its base. The retaining wall was some four to five meters (12–15 feet) high. On top of that was a mudbrick wall two meters (six feet) thick and about six to eight meters (20–26 feet) high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar mudbrick wall whose base was roughly 14 meters (46 feet) above the ground level outside the retaining wall (see diagram). This is what loomed high above the Israelites as they marched around the city each day for seven days. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for the Israelites to penetrate the impregnable bastion of Jericho."<sup>2</sup> See Figure 3 this page.

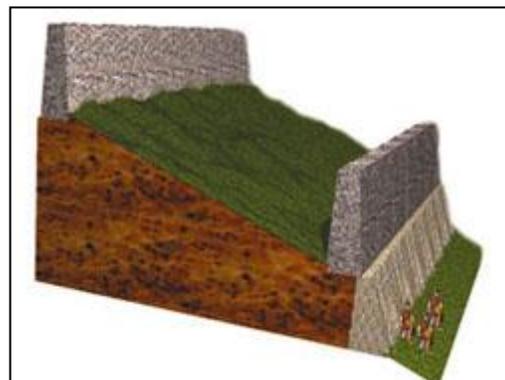


Figure 3: Schematic cross-section diagram  
[http://www.answersingenesis.org/Home/Area/Magazines/images/212cross\\_section.jpg](http://www.answersingenesis.org/Home/Area/Magazines/images/212cross_section.jpg)

### God Reveals the Plan of Attack

The Israelites besieged Jericho by surrounding its

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i2/jericho.asp>

walls. The Bible tells of the siege, “*Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.*” (Joshua 6:1) The siege would last only seven days as we will see. God then revealed the plan of Attack: “*See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.*”

Some interesting historical facts about Jericho include:

- Jericho is one of the oldest known cities in the history of the world dating back to 9250 BCE.
- Jericho is one of the most excavated cities, second only to Jerusalem, in the world. Archaeological excavation began in 1868 and continued well into the 20th century. 23 layers of ancient civilization have been documented.
- **8000 BCE** – The town was encircled by a massive, 10-foot thick, stone wall (the world's oldest), surrounded by a dry moat. Jericho was a town with a population of about 2,000. The wall was constructed more than 5000 years before the Egyptian pyramids (about 2686-2181 BCE).
- **7,000 to 2000 BCE** – The wall height was increased to 25 feet, an indication that the town's nomadic inhabitants had made the transition to a settled way of life. The earliest villages known elsewhere were dated more than 2,000 years later!
- **2000 BCE-1400 BCE** – Ceramic evidence shows that Jericho was occupied through the Late Bronze I period and was destroyed about 1400 BCE. This is the time of Joshua's invasion. Archaeology confirms the Bible's account.
- **1400- 586 BCE** – According to 1 Kings 16:34, Jericho was rebuilt by Hiel of Bethel during the reign of Ahab (873-851 BC). Lifting Joshua's curse cost him his eldest and youngest sons.

During this period, Elijah came here with his disciple Elisha. Within sight of Jericho, on the Plains of Moab, beneath Mount Nebo Elijah was taken up to heaven. Afterward, Elisha took up residence in Jericho, and the inhabitants came to him complaining that the water of their spring was harming their crops. The prophet purified the bitter water supply. Accordingly it is known as "Elisha's Spring" (2 Kings 2:19-22 ).

- **586 BCE** – Jericho fell to the Babylonians, marking the end of the kingdom of Judah. The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, was blinded and held at Jericho before being carried off to exile in Babylon (2 Kings 25:7). But Jews returning from exile in the same century rebuilt the city.
- **4th-1st centuries BCE** – Jericho was captured by Alexander the Great. Afterward, a new Jericho, sometimes called "Herodian Jericho," appeared about a mile to the southwest. Control of the town was traded between the Jews and Romans. Herod took control in 30 BCE and made it his eastern capital. This is the Jericho of the New Testament, where Jesus visited many times.
- **2nd-4th centuries CE** – Herod's city was virtually destroyed by the Romans during the Second Jewish Revolt. (70 CE)
- **7th-8th centuries CE** – A new era began in 634 with the Arab conquest. The Omayyads, ruling from Damascus, built a fortress and a mosque.
- **12th century CE** – Jericho came under Crusader control, but their departure following their defeat by Saladin in 1187 CE left it without protection against Bedouin raids from the desert, and the thriving town degenerated into a miserable village.

Source: Our Father Lutheran Church, Centennial, CO  
(<http://www.ourfatherlutheran.net/biblehomelands/palestine/jericho/jericho.htm>)

*March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.”* (Joshua 6:2-5)

God reassured Joshua and the Israelites that Jericho would be theirs. The plan was to 1.) March around the city once for six days, 2.) on the seventh day, march around the city seven times, 3.) at the completion of the seventh revolution the priests shall blow the trumpets, 4.) when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout, and 5.) the walls of Jericho will fall down flat.

#### *The Israelites' Execution*

Joshua and the Israelites executed God's plan to perfection. On the seventh day, as instructed, they circled Jericho seven times and at the conclusion of the seventh revolution when the priests sounded the trumpets Joshua commanded the Israelites, saying “*Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!*” (Joshua 6:16) They shouted and “*the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it--men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.*” (Joshua 6:20-21)

Of course Joshua honored the promise the two spies had made Rahab. “*Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the*

*prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.”* (Joshua 6:22-23)

The full judgment of God was brought on Jericho by agency of the Israelites that day. *“Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house.”* (Joshua 6:24) The city was dedicated to God and Joshua placed a curse on the city, saying *“Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: “At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.”* (Joshua 6:26) In the 9th century BCE Jericho was rebuilt by Hiel of Bethel during the reign of Ahab (873-851 BC). Lifting Joshua's curse cost him his eldest and youngest sons. (I Kings 1:34) God always follows through on His promises and this is no exception.

## Faith Is the Victory!

The lesson for us, in modern times, is that faith is the victory. We sing a song with that phrase. The faith of Joshua and the Israelites is recorded in the New Testament for our learning. (Romans 15:4) *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.”* (Hebrews 11:30-31)

Because Joshua and the Israelites walked by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7) he obeyed God's commands. This is a great example for us today. Faith can not be held without obedience. *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* (James 2:16-17) The fact that Joshua and the Israelites walked around Jericho seven days, and seven times on the seventh day, the priest blew their horns and the people gave a great shout didn't entitle them to conquer the city. That would be a foolish military strategy. The fact that they obeyed God entitled them to His blessings, because he promised it if they would obey, that brought down the wall and exposed Jericho to such conquest. These were not works that Joshua and the Israelites could boast about but rather works of faith. (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9)

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1) Faith is belief coupled with obedience and it gives you and I hope and trust that God will deliver the things He has promised us. Faith gives us confidence God will save those who are obedient to his cause and the story of Joshua and the Israelites' conquest of Jericho should build up that faith in us.

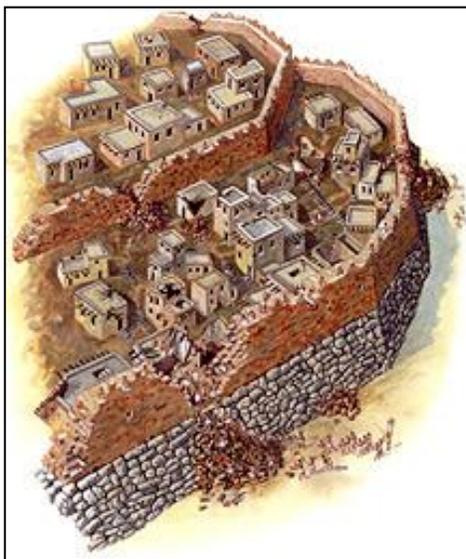


Figure 4: An artist's concept of the crumbled walls of Jericho

(<http://www.ourfatherlutheran.net/biblehomelands/palestine/jericho/jerichoartist.jpg>)

### Discussion Questions:

1. Is the Bible geographically correct when Jesus says a man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30)
  - a. If so, how could it be since Jericho is north of Jerusalem on a map?
  
2. Besides the wall falling in Joshua's day, with what other important times in history is Jericho connected?
  
3. How did God prepare Joshua and the three tribes whose inheritance would be on the east side the Jordan River to pursue Jericho on the west side of the Jordan River.
  
4. How was the time of the year when the Israelites were commanded to cross the Jordan River used by God to increase the people's faith in Him?
  
5. What two events occurred before the coming to conquer Jericho that exclusively connected Israel with God?
  
6. How high was the prominent wall of the city of Jericho?
  
7. How did God' instructions through Joshua demand "faith" in God ?
  
8. How could the walls falling down allow each man to walk straight before himself into the city? (cf. Joshua 6:5 20).

9. When did the walls of Jericho fall by faith?
10. Which statement is most accurate regarding the fall of the walls of Jericho?
- a. by grace alone
  - b. by faith alone
  - c. by grace through faith
  - d. by obedience of faith
  - e. both c and d
11. When is one saved by grace through faith today?
- a. before baptism
  - b. in baptism
  - c. without baptism
12. Does obeying specific commands of God take away God's grace when His promise is fulfilled?

