STORY

3/17/06

The Destruction of Jericho - Joshua Chapter 6 & 11:23

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, I know that You are the only righteous, all-knowing, all-powerful God. You hold my life in Your hands at all times. Teach me through this Bible story to learn to appreciate both Your power and Your righteousness. Make me to understand that You hate sin and wickedness, as You demonstrated in the destruction of Jericho. If those around me turn away from You, I pray that you would keep me ever faithful. Clear away from my life all that is displeasing to You, and let me adorn my life instead with love and service to You and to my neighbor. I pray also that You would give me the wisdom and ability to teach the lessons of this Bible story to the children entrusted to my care. In Jesus' Name I ask. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Jericho - One of the oldest cities known to man, its name means "City of Palms." At the time of Joshua it was probably the most important city on the fertile plain between the Jordan River on the East and the hills and mountains that stretch from north to south in the West. It was the guardian of the entrance to Canaan. Biblical archeology has found evidence of many cities built and rebuilt upon this site. From earliest times to about 3000 BC several cities were built and destroyed. From 3000 BC until the destruction by Joshua in 1400 BC four more distinct cities have been identified. The climate, which is tropical, probably explains why it was later used by Herod the Great as his winter palace.

Rahab the Harlot - A prostitute in Jericho who befriended the spies sent to search out the city before the attack by Joshua. Because of her help, she and her entire family were spared. They were the only recorded survivors of this city of about 10,000.

Abstain - to refuse to take part in or to take possession of; have nothing to do with.

Consecrated- set aside and dedicated for a specific purpose, in this case the gold, silver, bronze, and iron of the City of Jericho was to be dedicated to the Lord.

OUTER AIM

God destroys the wicked City of Jericho by the hand of Joshua and the Children of Israel.

INNER AIM

By the destruction of Jericho God demonstrates both His omnipotence and His holy intolerance of sin and unbelief.

BACKGROUND

TheChildrenofIsraelhave now crossed over the Jordan Riverand have enteredintothe

PromisedLand.The manna stopped on the dayaftertheybeganeatingthe fruitofthe land that had been promised to them (Joshua 5:12). Now they are faced with their first real military challenge - the fortified City of Jericho. Archeologists estimatethat the population of this city was about 10,000 at the time Israel attacked. Since we knowthatthe city was in a state of siege when Israel arrived, and since the walls enclosed only about six acres of land, we know that the city was probably very crowded. Prior to the attack Joshua is greatly encouraged by the presenceofthe "Commanderofthearmyofthe Lord,"who appearedtoJoshua nearthe city(Joshua 5:13-15).

Verses 1-2

- Jericho had received word of the approaching army of Israel and had taken refuge in their walled city. The city itself was not only double walled, it was also located at the summit of a raised plateau. From a military perspective the task of taking the city was daunting.
- The Lord made clear to Joshua that this was going to be *His* battle. *God* was going to defeat the city of Jericho. In so doing He was setting the stage for the entire conquest of the Promised Land. *With* God the Children of Israel could not fail. *Without* God they could not succeed.
- Notethe Lord'swords,**"See I*havegiven* Jericho into your hands."**OnceGoddeterminedthatthe city wastobedestroyed,itsfatewassealed.Joshua accepted this promise of the Lordinfaith, confident thatthe city had been delivered even before the walls had fallen.

Verses 3-11

- Given the size of the army of Israel and the relatively small footprint of the city of Jericho, the men of war could well have completely encircled the city as they marched around it.
- God wanted to demonstrate in this first battle in the Promised Land that He and He alone could deliver Israel's powerful enemies into their hands. What is more, they were not to rely on the cunning and bravery of man, but upon the power of God.
- Itiswidely speculated that the Children of Israel had to endure the taunts and jeers of the defenders on the wallsastheywalkedinperfectsilencearound the city. Thisisbynomeans certain. Theevil,paganinhabitants of Jericho were well awareofwhatthe GodofIsraelhad done for his people on the east side of the Jordan River, and they were utterly terrified of Israel (Joshua 2:8-11). Rahab told the spies that her people were "fainthearted" and their "hearts had melted, neither did thereremainanymorecourage inanyone because of (Israel)."Itis more likely then that the mood inJericho whileIsraelcircledwasone ofterrorand foreboding, rather than one of confidence and shouted insults.
- Although we cannot say with any certainty why God had the people circle the city once a day for six day, and then seven timesonthe seventhday, wedoknowthatitgave the people ofJericho ample time to repent and to turn to the Lord God. Whether or not any besides Rahab turned to the Lord is not known.
- Theeerie,piercingnotesofthe trumpets,the ominous silenceofthe armyofIsrael, and thesound ofmarching feetmusthave beenaterrifyingspectacle. The people of Jericho were well aware that the GodofIsraelhad parted the waters of the Red Sea. How secure could they have felt, even behind their fortified walls, when faced with such an enemy?

Verses 12-19

- Israel did exactly as the Lord had commanded, and God granted them success. If only the people had learned the lesson the Lord was teaching them at Jericho, what future misery they could have avoided. In subsequent attacks they repeatedly failed to carry out the Lord's commands and paid a heavy penalty.
- Notethe faithofJoshua ashe adopts the same "already accomplished" confidence ofthe

Lord:**"Shout,for the Lord *has given* you the city!"** Though the walls still stood, in his mind the destructionofthe city was already an accomplished fact, for the Lord had declared it.

- Joshua honors the promise made by the spies to Rahab.Hereisevidenceofthe mercyofGod, for although Heseverelypunishedthe wicked inhabitants ofCanaan, Hedemonstratedmercyand kindnesstothosewho turned to Him in faith. (Cf. Rahab's confession in Joshua 2:11)

Verses 20-25

- Archeology on the old site of Jericho has verified that Jericho was a double walled city when Joshua attacked. The outer wall was made of brick and was six feet thick, the inner wall, also of brick, was about twelve feetthickand thirty feet in height. The two walls were divided by a space ofabout fourteenfeet.The Bible's simple statement that "the wall fell down flat" has also been verified by archeology. The entire wall, bothinnerand outer,felloutward.Theouterwallfelldownthe sidesofthe riseonwhichthe citywaslocated. Theinnerwallfilledthe spacebetweenthe wallsand beyond. Archeologists note with some amazement that the wallsshowednosignsofdecayordeteriorationthatcould have causedtheir fall,thus dispellingthe notion that "tremors" caused "decrepit walls" to collapse. They were pushed down by the finger of God.
- The destruction of the fortifications by God was so complete that the soldiers of Israel could all rush in at once. Most often in a siege a small breach is made in the wall, through which the whole army must pass at great risk. In Jericho the Lord God literally paved the way for the army of Israel.
- God commanded Israel to kill all of the citizens of Jericho (except for the family of Rahab). In prideful ignoranceBible criticshave citedthislackofmercyasevidenceofacruelGod- a different Godthanthe one pictured in the New Testament. Yet we know that God is just, as well as loving. The city of Jericho was extremelywicked, and their time ofjudgment hadcome.Theclearmessage isthatGoddoesnottolerateevil indefinitely. Man will be called to account for his evil.
- We ought to also recognize the love of God demonstrated here. His master plan for the Children of Israel was to send the Saviorthrough them. God knew that the perversion of Canaan would surely destroy Israel longbeforethe birthof Jesus if the pagan peoples were allowed toremaininthe land.Inlove forallmankind (who would later gain eternal benefit from the Messiah) Godvisitedjudgment uponthe paganpeoplesliving in the Promised Land.
- Though the destruction was complete, God managed to preserve the house of Rahab, which was situated on the wall. Israelthenburnedwhatevercould bedestroyed,and collected the gold, silver, bronze, and iron for the Lord.

Verses 26-27 and 11:23

- Joshua pronouncesacurseuponwhomeverwould daretorebuild whatthe Lordhadchosentodestroy. The citythereforelaydesolateafterthe destructionbyJoshua forsome 540 years.Itwasrebuilt byHielofBethel in 860 BC and the curse of Joshua was fulfilled at that time. (1 Kings 16:34).
- Joshua rested from war and conquest after he had accomplished all that the Lord had required ofhim.This resting from war did not mark the end of all conquest in the Promised Land, but ratherthe establishment of a foothold for Israel. There were more battles to come, but Joshua's part was done. Israel now set about fortifying its position and cultivating the lands they had captured.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, I am often tempted to put my trust and confidence in myself rather than in You.

Remind me often so that I never forget that You are my strength, the only One who can deliver me from my enemies. As you fought for the Children of Israel, fight also for me. Grant that I never forget how You feel about sin and disobedience, and fill me with joy in knowing that You paid for all of my sins on the cross. Give me comfort in knowing that You are always with me and will never leave me. As the Children of Israel could not defeat the city of Jericho without you, so too apart from You I can accomplish no good thing. Strengthen my faith and help me to always trust in You as my God and Savior. In Jesus Name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This account can be read in class. Larger classes might also enjoy acting out the drama of the battle by marching around human "walls" that fall down at the shout of the people.

APPLICATIONS

1. Notethe patienceand the trusttaught by God to the warriors of Israel in this lesson. It must have seemed silly and pointlessto simply walk around a fortified city for seven days with no sound but the marching of feet and the blowingoftrumpets.Letthe childrenseethatGod's ways are very often not man's ways, and visa versa. Our calling as Christians is not to understand God and His ways, but to obey and trust.

2. Notethatagroup ismadeup of individuals. Every member is important.Hadanyofthe Israelitesdisobeyed God'scommand towalk around the cityofJericho insilence,the displeasureoftheLordwould have affected the whole of Israel. So also later when Achan took and kept from Jericho that whichbelongedtothe Lord, allIsrael suffered. Use these facts to demonstrate to the students that this not only applies tobeingpartofa team in the secular world, it also applies to every member of the Christian Church. Each one of us is an ambassador for Christ. The poor conduct of even one will reflect badly not only on the whole Church, but also on our Savior Jesus.

3. Just as God preserved Rahab in the midst of the utter destruction of Jericho, so God today can and will preserve those who believe in Him, even though God's Children are surrounded by enemies on all sides. Though Rahab and her familywerenodoubtsaddenedbythe thought oflosing all of their friends in Jericho, they had found a new family among the people of God. Show your students how they too might be called upon to forsake friends and even family members for the sake of the gospel. (You might ask if any have friends or familymemberswho belongtofalseteachingchurchesand discusswiththemthe bestways tohelp thosefriends or family members - i.e., not to join them in the false church but to call them out to the church that teaches the pure Word of God.)

4. It is important to discuss with the students why God commanded the death ofall of the inhabitants not only ofJericho but ofallofCanaan. Use this fact to demonstrate how God feels about sin. Thepunishment ofthe unbelievers in Canaan is a foreshadowing of the coming judgment of the whole unbelieving world.

Use the destruction of the Godless to contrast the loving, merciful, undeserved rescue of us sinners (pictured by Rahab the prostitute). All men deserve God's wrath and destruction. For Jesus' sake He has granted us pardon and peace.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

(Hebrews 11:30 NKJV) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.
(Deuteronomy3:22NKJV) 'You must not fear them (the enemy), for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.' (Psalms 103:12 NKJV) As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Middle any of the above and...

(Psalms 27:1 NKJV) The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?
(2Chronicles20:20NKJV)"Hearme,O Judahand you inhabitants of Jerusalem:Believe inthe LORDyour God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."
(Psalms 103:10NKJV) (The Lord) has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Upper any of the above and...

(Psalms 18:2 NKJV) The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
(Psalms 127:1 NKJV) Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.
(Psalms 103:8-9 NKJV) The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. {9} He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.

HYMN CHOICES

"If God Himself be for Me" TLH #528:1 & 4 "Who Trusts in God a Strong Abode" TLH# 437:1-2 "Built on the Rock the Church doth Stand" TLH# 467:1-3