

# *Joshua 5:13 – 6:27*

## *Jericho is Fallen*

Bogdan Witecki

April 13, 2026

**Read Joshua 5:13 – 6:27**

**Remembering the structure of the Book of Joshua** CROSS TAKE DIVIDE  
SERVE

**Elements of the story** Commander of the LORD's army – God's strategy for conquering Jericho – People of Israel carry on God's strategy – Jericho is taken – Rahab and her family delivered from the judgment

- Verses 5:13 – 15 depict Joshua's encounter with the Commander of the army of the LORD. Here is what we can learn from these verses:
  1. Who is *a man* that Joshua saw?
    - Even though the verse speaks of *a man* it does not necessarily mean that it was a human being
    - Three men visiting Abraham (Genesis 18:2) were revealed to be the LORD God and two angels
    - Jacob wrestling with the man at Jabbok, later revealed that *I have seen God face to face*: Genesis 32:24; 30.
    - It is the Angel of the LORD; following the description of the man Joshua encounter compared to the passage in Numbers 22:23 – *And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand.*

and the similarities with Moses' experience at the burning bush (*take off your sandals from your feet for the place where you standing is holy*)

2. Who, then, is the Angel of the LORD?

- Taking into account above Scripture parallels we can conclude that the angel of the LORD is God Himself
- Joshua 6:2 seems to confirm it – most probably the words *See I have given Jericho into your hand...* were spoken by the commander of the army of the LORD (the angel of the LORD)
- In Judges 13:17 – 22 we read about the angel of the LORD being identified as God Himself
- Joshua's reaction to the command to take off his sandals – awe, reverence and worship (accepted NOT rebuked)
- John Calvin: *I willingly receive what ancient writers teach on this subject – that when Christ anciently appeared in a human form, it was a prelude to the mystery which was afterwards exhibited when God was manifested in the flesh*
- "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" – The Angel of the LORD does not answer directly. *Now I have come*
  - \* The Angel of the LORD arrives to fulfill the promise God made to Israel (Exodus 23:20-23)
  - \* The LORD God is for Himself

3. Joshua's encounter resembles Moses' encounter with the LORD in the burning bush

**Jericho Taken** The LORD God gives Jericho into the hands of Israel; provides miraculous means for conquering the city

- Opening verse of chapter 6: Here we have a reaction to the mighty works of God by the sinful, rebellious people
- The LORD God subdues the enemy while Israel remains *strong and courageous*

- From the human point of view Jericho was unassailable (shut down), yet the LORD God declares that Jericho is already given into the hands of Israel
- God's declaration about giving Jericho into Joshua's hand should be followed by a military action, yet what follows are God's commands contrary to any military strategy
- The army of Israel is to follow precisely God's strategy:
  1. The conquest of Jericho will take seven days
  2. The Israelites are commanded to march around the city
  3. There is an exact order for those who march: the fighting men followed by the seven priests with seven trumpets, then the Ark of the LORD carried by Levites. Finally there is a "rear guard" of soldiers that follow the Ark
  4. This order of marching formation is similar to Egyptian battle configuration (Beale). So the inhabitants of Jericho would certainly recognize that the city is encircled by the army ready for battle
  5. On the days one through six the people of Israel circled the city once a day; people being silent all the time, the only sound was the sound of the trumpets blown by the priests – a vivid example of perfect obedience of Israel to God's command
  6. On the seventh day the Israelites marched around the city seven times; silently during the first six times and on the last, seventh time priests blow the trumpets and the people shout at Joshua's command
  7. Even though the Israelites were not skilled in conquering the cities, they would understand that the detailed directions regarding 'the siege of Jericho' which they have received from the LORD did not have anything to do with military art of the time
  8. Hebrews 11:30 tells us that *by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days*
  9. The story of Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14). Naaman,

the commander of the Syrian army comes to Elisha in order to be healed from leprosy. Elisha tells him to go and wash in the Jordan seven times, which advice Naaman initially scorns. The advice is too simple for Naaman. Having been persuaded by his servants, Naaman returns to the Jordan, washes himself seven times and is cleansed. Neither the water of the Jordan nor the number seven had anything to do with the miracle of cleansing. The LORD God has set outward means for the accomplishment of His miracle and communicated them to Naaman through Elisha

10. As in the crossing of the Jordan, the ark symbolizes the Presence of the Lord. Even though the Israelites are marching in a military order, it is the LORD God that fights for them and delivers Jericho, and ultimately the land, into their hands. The presence of trumpets and shouts adds glory to the ceremonial aspect of the march

- The repetition of the numeral *seven* is very significant here:
  1. In Hebrew tradition number seven symbolizes completion or points to an accomplished task
  2. Seven days needed for the fall of Jericho connect the redemptive act of God (delivering Jericho and the promised land to the children of Israel) with His act of creation (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- There is a break in the flow of the narrative following verse 16
- Before they arrive at the results of the final seventh lap around the city, the people of Israel are given instructions regarding the taking of the city
- The interruption of the narrative signifies the importance of the instructions

**The complete destruction of Jericho** God commands Israel to totally destroy Jericho and its inhabitants

1. The concept of total and radical destruction of the Canaanites is very difficult to fathom (we will encounter more description of

it later in the Book of Joshua). It is hard for us to think of our Father in heaven issuing a command to Joshua requiring complete slaughter of men, women and children in Jericho. This apparent complete lack of mercy does not agree with a popular understanding that God is a loving God, compassionate and always ready to forgive

2. The Scripture is clear from the beginning: the penalty for sin is death. The Lord warned Adam that "in the day you eat of [that tree] you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). The fact that both Adam and Eve did not die right away is the revelation of God's grace (in fact the same applies to all of us), but it does not diminish or nullify the penalty for sin, namely death. The delay of judgment is God's gracious provision (called common grace) that allows the redemptive history to unfold (Rom. 3:25-26)
3. The Day of Judgment is the day when the true reality of new creation is revealed. The children of God will be like their Savior (1 John 3:2-3), the sheep will be separated from the goats, wheat from tares
4. Right now, though, this distinction between righteous and unrighteous is often indistinguishable
5. Every now and then, the LORD brings about events in redemptive history that Meredith Kline calls *intrusion ethics* – the ethics from the Day of Judgment intrudes into the redemptive history providing clear example of the ultimate, consummate, eschatological ethics: where sin is punished by death and the righteous one is vindicated before the Lord
6. The conquest of Canaan and total destruction of Jericho is an example, a type of the Day of Judgment. The total, complete destruction of men, women and children of Jericho exemplifies the righteous and just action of the Holy God against sinful people (through His servant Israel)
7. In the conquest of Jericho God used Israel as an instrument of delivering judgment upon the Canaanites and Amorites; in the same way God used pagan nations (Assyria and Babylon) to deliver judgment upon Israel and Judah

8. This judgment is just and righteous. The people dwelling in the land were rebellious sinners, yet God delayed the execution of His judgement (Genesis 15:16 *the iniquity of of the Amorites is not yet complete*).
9. It is final and complete – note the meaning of the curse pronounced by Joshua upon anyone who rebuilds Jericho
10. How does this understanding of *total destrucion of Jericho* relate to the popular perception of God in the New Testament? In other words, does the Old Testament reveal cruel and vengeful God, while New Testament loving and merciful God?
  - First, our God does not change. He is just and holy and merciful, and revealed Himself as such both in the Old and New Testament. His extraordinary example of grace is Rahab and her family. Also, the first six days of Israel's going around Jericho clearly serves as a delay of judgment, giving the people of Jericho time to repent
  - Second, the Canaanites and Amorites justly deserved to die (as do the rest of us). That not all of us are dead is another extraordinary display of His forbearance and grace
  - Third, why is it that we get so worked up by the cruelty of killing the nations of sinners and are not moved by the worst crime of all the time: crucifixion of the only truly innocent man, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? He suffered the ultimate judgment of God in our place. The Lord Jesus took upon Himself our sins, thus He who knew no sin became sin for us and endured the wrath of God, God's Day of Judgement. So we do have a revelation of God's wrath and judgment in the New Testament, only it is directed at His only begotten Son. Similarly, we do have a revelation of God's love and mercy in the Old Testament, but it is balanced by the revelation of His wrath and judgment in a typological way since the Christ's work on the cross was yet to come (Rom. 3:25,26)
11. The conclusion of the story of Rahab:

- As we have noted earlier, Rahab is a vivid example of God's mercy at the Day of Judgment
  - The conquest of Jericho being an example of intrusion ethics, the separation of Rahab and her family from the rest of the dwellers of Jericho typifies the separation of sheep from the goats, or wheat from tares
  - Israel, the servant of the Lord, is the one who brings the judgment upon the Jericho and who separates Rahab and her family from the rest
  - Our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Israel, when He comes again will judge the living and the dead, will separate the unrighteous from the righteous, for whom He Himself bore the judgment of God.
12. God's curse on anyone who rebuilds Jericho is not a magical incantation – the Lord God commanded Joshua to speak the word of God and it is God Himself who makes it come to pass
  13. The curse is fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34 *In his days of Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.*
  14. The curse on the rebuilders of Jericho is contrasted by the blessing God pronounces over Joshua
  15. While Jericho is brought down low, Joshua is exalted in the whole land
  16. Finally, we need to remember the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive narrative in the Bible. God's commandment to Israel regarding complete destruction of Jericho DOES NOT set the pattern for us to follow