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(Joshua 6)

Intro. When we think about miracles & the way they appear in Scripture, we realize they don't happen around us every day. Please understand what I'm saying here: I'm not saying God isn't at work every day, because He is. I'm saying God doesn't step into our world all the time & break the laws of nature which He has established. Thus, His miracles are few, but special, whether we think of causing an axe head to float in a river (saving a man from slavery to repay the debt of a borrowed axe, 2 Kings 6), sparing Daniel's friends in a fiery furnace (Daniel 3) or saving Daniel from a den of lions (Daniel 6), causing Jonah to be vomited out of a great fish after 3 days (Jonah 2) & such. God performed some miracles during Joshua's lifetime, including tearing down the walls of Jericho. For all the kids out there, the scene you are about to see is from a movie made out of Legos called “Jericho” & the Israelites have already marched for 6 days & the residents of Jericho are trying to pass the time (play clip). Only God could have torn the walls of Jericho down, because He is all-powerful. His sovereignty still affects us today, pushing us in “Moving Forward: In Victory.” Let's read Joshua 6 together.

Theme: Miracle/God's sovereignty

Background: After Yahweh delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage through the 10 Plagues & crossing the Red Sea, Israel sinned by refusing to trust God in taking the land He had promised to them & their ancestors. Thus, they wandered in the Wilderness for 38 years until the leaders of that generation died. God then called Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land & He commanded Joshua to have strength, courage, faith & obedience in leading the people. God stopped the Jordan River from flowing so Israel could cross safely & then the Lord appeared to Joshua just before leading Israel into battle.

Brief Overview of the Narrative:

- Because this is one of the most well-known stories in the OT, I won't take time to mention everything, but a few things in covering the text, before focusing on a few lessons we learn from this passage of Scripture.
 - One of the features you notice about this chapter is its repetition of events—circling the city, blowing the trumpets, carrying the ark, the city's destruction & so on—this repetition serves to emphasize the extraordinary work of God through ordinary means
 - Verse 1 informs us that Jericho was doing everything it could to protect & defend itself.
 - When the people marched around the city, archaeologists tell us the city in that time period wasn't very big, but fortified with strong walls. It was only about 600 meters in circumference. We don't know how large the column of those marching was, but it is possible the head of it was back at camp before the last lines completed their circle.
- Illus: Some people have wondered what the priests were playing as they blew the trumpets & walked around the city each day. It may have been “We're Marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion, we're marching onward to Zion, the beautiful city of God” or maybe “Oh, when the Saints Go Marching In, oh when the saints go marching in, oh, Lord, I want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in.”
- The Scripture is clear the walls were going to fall down “flat”—not outward or inward but the stones were going to collapse under themselves
 - Joshua remains trustworthy because Rahab & her family are spared from the destruction
 - Yahweh remained faithful in being with Joshua so his fame spread in the land

Lessons we learn from this passage:

I. God's presence & power can bring miracles & victory (6:6, 20)

- “ark”—10x in the first 13 verses; symbolizes Yahweh's presence among His people
 - One of the clear messages of the exodus from Egypt & the conquest of Canaan is Yahweh fights for His people!
- Illus: Miracles, by nature, are rare occurrences when God upsets normal procedures, but they can happen—I know accounts where people had cancer only to find it wasn't there after much prayer & people dying but brought back to life—my grandmother, who just passed away 10 days ago, died on January 1, 1986. My Mom felt her & she was stiff & cold & life was leaving her. Later, she talked about seeing a bright light but was returned to Earth before she could take it all in. God brought her back to us & gave us almost 30 more years together.
- Most of the time, God allows things to run their course through the downward effects of sin, disease & death, but He steps in at times to remind us of His power. If He did it all the time, we would take it for granted, but He is always close to comfort us when we don't get the answer from Him we wanted to have

- Such a message of the Lord fighting for His people will ring loud & clear at the return of Christ—He will fight for His people & the rest of the unbelieving world will not stand a chance!

II. God’s people have to be faithful in obeying the Lord’s commands (6:2-5, 20)

- Victory didn’t just come because the walls fell down, but the people had to march around the city, the priests had to blow the trumpets & the people had to shout before Yahweh would cause the walls to fall & Israel had to attack the inhabitants of Jericho & destroy the city—the text describes minute commands precisely followed (Butler, 65)

Illus: I’ve known churches sit around & do nothing while waiting on God to step in, but they weren’t even being faithful to what He commanded them to do to reach others—you cannot expect God to bring growth if we aren’t faithful to His most basic commands

III. God is holy & as such, when He commands war, it is for holy purposes (6:16-17; cf. Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 27:28-29; Deuteronomy 13:12-18)—to reward His people & to judge sinners

- God is the Creator & as the Creator, He can destroy what He creates—one example is the Flood
- Yahweh promised a specific piece of land to Abraham & his offspring through Isaac & Jacob & God would overthrow the inhabitants of that land because of their iniquity (Gen 15:16), specifically in their loyalty to false gods & Yahweh wanted to establish a theocracy with total allegiance of Israel to Him (Deuteronomy 13:12-18)
- Whatever is devoted to the Lord is holy to Him & must be dealt with accordingly, whether devoted to the treasury (to maintain the tabernacle and its furnishings) or devoted to destruction (Lev 27:28-29; Deut 7; 20:16-18)
- A type of holy war will occur again when Christ returns to judge the unbelieving nations & deliver His people
- Furthermore, the destruction of the people & possessions of Jericho foreshadows a much greater destruction worldwide when the Lord destroys everyone & everything except His people (cf. Jeremiah 51:63-64; Revelation 18:20-21)

Illus: What God commanded to Israel then & what He will do at the return of Christ are part of holy war, but what happened during the Crusades of AD 1095-1291 was not commanded by God but was an ambition of the Popes during that time period. Some Muslims like to say the only things they are doing today with jihad is in response to the way Christians treated them 1,000 years ago, but they conveniently overlook the wars they began from AD 630-732 in sweeping across the Middle East, North Africa, across the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain & were going to push into the heart of Europe until they were stopped by Charles Martel. The first 100 years of Islam was marked by bloodshed & conquest, but Christianity is called to spread via the gospel of grace

IV. God is faithful & fulfills His promise (6:2-5, 20, 25-27; cf. 1:2, 6)

- What God said He would do, He did & whatever God said He will do, He shall
 - A. To curse the disobedient/unfaithful**
 - No one was to rebuild the foundation & gates of Jericho (establish it as a stronghold) without costing them greatly—fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34
 - B. To deliver the obedient/faithful**
 - One of the high points of Joshua 6 is not only the miraculous fall of Jericho & the fame of Joshua but also the deliverance of Rahab & her family, as they were promised in chapter 2, for they confessed Yahweh as the One True God
 - Israel understood foreigners were welcome within the congregation when they confessed Yahweh, the God of Israel & helped Israel (6:25; cf. 2:9-11; Exodus 12:38)
 - The chapter closes with a note on God’s curse for the disobedient/unfaithful & blessing for the obedient/faithful (6:26-27)

Illus: If we had the time, we could sit here for hours & days listening to one another share about the faithfulness of God in their lives. My grandmother regularly witnessed of God’s faithfulness, even when a husband cheated on her & left her for another woman & another husband beat her. She often said God was always good to her.

Conc. When we think about miracles, it isn’t uncommon to think about Jesus—feeding 5,000 men plus women & children with a few loaves of bread & a couple of fish, healing the sick, calming the storm, being born of a virgin & the greatest miracle was rising from the dead after 3 days. I cannot tell you if God has a miracle in store for FBS as a whole, but I can tell you He is ready & willing to raise the spiritually dead & give them life. He does that miracle every day around the world. He can do it in your life. And your response to His work of grace must be repentance from sin & trusting in Him. Then, just like Israel at Jericho, you can be “Moving Forward: In Victory!”