

• *God often does unusual miracles at the beginning of a phase of His kingdom*

1. Strongholds that at first seem beyond the possibility of being overcome

• *God gives prior knowledge of events to Joshua*

• *Strongholds – powerful focal points of opposition to God and spiritual progress*

2. God’s purpose is to lead His people to overcome ‘strongholds’

• *Instructions*

The conquest of Canaan began with the taking of Jericho. The town was given to Joshua miraculously, with very little effort on the part of the Israelites. On other occasions they would have to fight harder! This is another example of what we have seen in connection with Joshua 5:12; God often does unusual miracles at the beginning of a phase of His kingdom. When God’s work needs a dramatic beginning, God is able to bring it about.

1. In the life of faith we encounter strongholds that at first seem beyond the possibility of being overcome. Jericho was a stronghold. Joshua was considering it, when the Lord appeared to him in angelic form¹. The town was locked up tight so that no one could go in and no one could get out². But the Captain of the angels of God continues speaking to Joshua. The chapter division between 5:15 and 6:1 should be ignored. ‘The man’ of 5:13–15 is still speaking. God is about to bring down this fortified city and get Joshua to destroy it³; Joshua is being given prior knowledge of the victory that is coming.

God is appearing to Joshua, as He appeared at creation¹, in the garden of Eden², at the time of the flood³, as He appeared to Abraham⁴, to Jacob⁵, and as He had appeared at various times during the life of Moses. Joshua is the true successor to Moses. God has parted the Jordan for Joshua as He parted the Sea of Reeds for Moses. God appeared to Moses giving him prior knowledge of events⁶; He now appears to Joshua giving him prior knowledge of events.

Christians face ‘strongholds’, powerful focal points of opposition to God, obstacles to spiritual progress. The same thing was true in the days of Joshua. God had plans to give Canaan to His people, but the most powerful fortress had to be overcome first. The people of Jericho thought they were beyond defeat. They thought they had only to sit tight in their stronghold and the Israelites, who had no experience of breaking into fortresses, would have to abandon the task.

2. God’s purpose is to lead His people to overcome ‘strongholds’. The first blockage in the way of progress in the land of Canaan was Jericho, but Joshua had to simply follow God’s instructions in obedient faith and Jericho would fall. The purpose of God was sure, but the instructions had to be followed. Joshua had led the people in obedience¹; now God was rewarding him. ‘He that has my commands and keeps them... I will love him and manifest myself to him’².

God gives Joshua detailed instructions. For six days he and his soldiers should march around the town¹. The ark was to be in a prominent position, with seven priests blowing seven trumpets². On the seventh day the marching was multiplied by seven. There would be a long trumpet blast, a great shout – and the walls of the town would collapse³. (It reminds us of the day when Jesus returns, when once again there will be a shout and the sound of a trumpet – 1 Thessalonians 4:16.)

Joshua has to obey instructions. The event will take time. It will only take seven days but the walls do not fall instantly on the first day. The ark – symbolising the kingship of God – was in a prominent position. It was God who was giving Jericho to His

¹ 5:13–15

² 6:1

³ 6:2

¹ Genesis 1:2

² Genesis 3:8

³ see Psalm 29

⁴ Genesis 15;

18

⁵ Genesis 32

⁶ Exodus 3

¹ in the events of 5:1–12

² John 14:21

¹ 6:3

² 6:4a

³ 6:4b– 5

• “Seven” - Perfectly in accord with God’s will

people. The trumpets spoke of warning and of the intervention of God in carrying His people into a new stage of their story. The shout was a shout of triumph. The predominance of the number seven emphasised that everything was being done perfectly in accord with God’s will. (The ‘completeness’ of the seven-day week gave the impression of completeness to the number seven.)

Amazingly little effort was needed for this powerful stronghold to fall. No battering-rams were used or swords waved in the air. No attempt was made to tunnel under the walls. No drawn-out siege was necessary. Just a week of obedience and God gave the people everything they needed. The city would be taken with exceptional ease.

• Simple obedience to simple instructions brings mighty results

God requires simple obedience to the simple instructions that He gives us. The methods God used were unprecedented, but they were simple. Sometimes God does things in an unusual way. It may be a leprous king simply washing in the Jordan, a baby born in Bethlehem, a Nazarene hanging on a cross, or uneducated fishermen doing some preaching and praying. God uses the despised things of this world, and He uses despised methods. But although God uses simple and despised methods He does not do the work without any utensils at all. Joshua does have to obey what God says. So Joshua calls the priests and passes on the instructions^{□1}. He persistently trusts God. By a faith which persistently does what God says, we inherit the promises of God. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, **after** they were encompassed about for seven days^{□2}.

Joshua gets the people to obey the instructions that he has been given by God. The priests go forward first with the ark behind them^{□1}. This part of the battle is not being won by soldiers who fight; it is being won by priests who obey God. The soldiers are simply guarding the ark.

• Mighty things done by spiritual methods

Through the obedience of faith, the town fell without any great efforts being made! It took no great mighty struggle. Not an Israelite was injured. The weapons of our warfare are mighty. God’s people pull down strongholds. What mighty things can be done by spiritual methods. Simple obedience to instructions, simple faith, simple prayer, uncomplicated attention to God’s will – and Jericho’s walls will fall.

□1 7:6–7
□2 Hebrews 11:30

□1 6:89



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