

Introduction

Illustration: The biblical concept of Holy War is somewhat controversial. We will read an example of that in Joshua, where God commands Israel to kill almost everyone in an entire city.

Dietrich Boenhoffer is a modern example of this dilemma. Boenhoffer was a German Theologian under Nazi leadership. Boenhoffer was quite outspoken against the Nazis. At one point, he was involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. He was arrested and executed for his involvement.

One reason Boenhoffer considered this the right action was his belief that faith without works was dead. Additionally, he believed that Christians had a responsibility to stand against evil.

Jericho

The story of Israel's conquest of Jericho is equally controversial. However, we learn a great lesson from this passage. [Joshua 5:13-6:27](#) teaches that **God gave Israel victory over Jericho; therefore, they devoted everything to Him.**

Although God is not instructing us to make war against a city or people-group, God does expect us to make war against our sin. What we read about in [Joshua 6](#) directly applies to our struggle against sin.

Question: *Are you trusting in God's power or your own?*

God's Army

God goes with His people. [Joshua 5:13-15](#) "13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn **sword** in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" 14 And he said, "No; but I am the **commander of the army of the Lord**. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and **worshiped** and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" 15 And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "**Take off your sandals** from your feet, for the place where you are standing is **holy**." And Joshua did so."

(14) *Who did this warrior say he commanded?* He was the "commander of the army of the Lord." Remember, God has promised that He would **give** the land to Israel, not that they would have to earn it ([Josh 1:2](#), [6](#), [11](#)).

(14) *What was Joshua's response to meeting this warrior?* Joshua "**worshiped**" him (although this could refer to reverence, not worship).

*(15) What reason did the warrior give for telling Joshua to remove his sandals? He said the place Joshua was standing was **holy**.*

There are four reasons I believe **this was God Himself, not an angel**. (1) When Joshua worshiped, the “angel” did not rebuke him, although that would be the proper response for an angel ([Rev 19:10](#); [22:8-9](#)). (2) The command to remove shoes because of holy ground parallels Moses at the burning bush. [Exodus 3:5-6](#) “5 Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” (3) In [Exod 33](#), God told Moses He would send an angel instead of going with Israel to the land ([Exod 33:2-3](#)). Moses pleaded that it would be better to remain in the wilderness with God than inherit the land without Him ([Exod 33:12-16](#)). God promised that He would go with them into the land ([Exod 33:14](#)). (4) If the following context continues this meeting, the conversation is between Joshua and the Lord. [Joshua 6:2](#) “2 And the Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.” There are no chapter divisions.

The point is that **God goes with His people**. They are not going into the land alone.

Battle Plan

God fights on behalf of His people. [Joshua 6:1-7](#) “1 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. 2 And the Lord said to Joshua, “See, **I have given** Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. 3 You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. 4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall **blow the trumpets**. 5 And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall **shout with a great shout**, and the **wall of the city will fall down flat**, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.” 6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord.” 7 And he said to the people, “Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD.”

(3-4) How many times did they march around Jericho? They marched once per day for six days and seven times on the seventh day (13 times total).

(5) *What did God promise would happen to the city on the seventh day?* The city wall would “fall down flat.” This was a concern for the Exodus generation. [Numbers 13:28](#) “28 However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.” God is showing this generation that **fortified walls are insignificant**.

[Joshua 6:8-16](#) “8 And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them. 9 The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, “You shall not **shout or make your voice heard**, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.” 11 So he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. 12 Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. 13 And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. 14 And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days. 15 On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. 16 And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.

This is largely a repeat of the instructions of [Josh 6:3-7](#). The repetition is important. They were obeying God’s instructions. Again, this contrasts the Exodus generation who were unwilling to go to cities like Jericho.

If you watched this battle, who would you credit for the victory over Jericho? The victory is clearly God’s work, not Israel’s marching and shouting did not bring down the walls. God brought down the walls. **God fights on behalf of His people**.

Total Devotion

Everything in Jericho was devoted to God. [Joshua 6:17-21](#) “17 And the city and all that is within it shall be **devoted** to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But you, **keep yourselves from the things**

devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the **treasury of the Lord.**" 20 So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. 21 Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword."

*(17) Who was to be spared in Jericho? Rahab and everyone in her house would be saved. How would Israel know which house to spare? [Joshua 2:18](#) "18 Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this **scarlet cord in the window** through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household." Where was Rahab's house? [Joshua 2:15](#) "15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was **built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall.**" God's salvation of Rahab was unlikely, yet He saved her.*

(19) What was Israel to do with all of the valuable metals in Jericho? The metals were brought into the Tabernacle treasury to be used in worship.

*(21) What did Israel do to all of the people and animals in Jericho? They killed everyone and all the animals. Why didn't they save some of the animals for sacrifice (e.g., oxen and sheep)? [1 Samuel 15:3](#) "3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "" [1 Samuel 15:8-9](#) "8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction." [1 Samuel 15:13-15](#) "13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord." 14 And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.'" [1 Samuel 15:22](#) "22 And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying** the voice of the Lord? Behold, to **obey** is better than **sacrifice**, and to **listen** than the fat of rams."*

Why did Israel kill the women and children? [Deuteronomy 7:2-4](#) “2 and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must **devote** them to complete **destruction**. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. 3 You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would **turn away your sons** from following me, to serve other gods...” [Deuteronomy 20:17-18](#) “17 but you shall **devote** them to complete **destruction**, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18 that they may not **teach you** to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.” [Deuteronomy 9:4-5](#) “4 “Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the **wickedness** of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. 5 Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the **wickedness** of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

[Joshua 6:22-25](#) “22 But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.” 23 So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. 24 And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. 25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father’s household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And **she has lived in Israel to this day**, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.”

(25) How long did Rahab live in Israel? She lived until the writing of the book at least. [Matt 1:5](#) points out that she married into Israel and was an ancestor of Jesus (through David).

[Joshua 6:26-27](#) “26 Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, “Cursed before the Lord be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. “At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.” 27 So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.”

(26) *What would be the cost of rebuilding the city of Jericho?* It would cost a person his firstborn and his youngest son. During the days of Elijah and King Ahab, a man rebuilt Jericho and lost his firstborn and youngest son. [1 Kings 16:34](#) “34 In his days 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 the son of Nun.”

Nothing was spared in Jericho. **Everything was devoted to God** (including Rahab).

Biblical Theology

The main point of [Joshua 5:13-6:27](#) is that **God gave Israel victory over Jericho; therefore, they devoted everything to Him.**

Contextualization: We do not fight wars against nations or tribes ([Eph 6:12](#)). We fight spiritual battles with spiritual and eternal outcomes. Yet, we see the same principles from [Joshua 6](#) fulfilled in the NT. **God gives us victory; therefore, we devote everything to Him.**

In the NT, how does God give us victory and what do we devote to Him?

Victory in Jesus

How does God give us victory in the NT? **Jesus defeats sin and death on our behalf.** [Romans 5:17-21](#) “17 For if, because of one man’s trespass, **death reigned** through that **one man**, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of **righteousness reign in life** through the **one man Jesus Christ**. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the **law came in to increase the trespass**, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as **sin reigned in death, grace also might reign** through righteousness leading to eternal life **through Jesus Christ** our Lord.”

(17) *By what “one man” has death reigned over humanity?* This refers to Adam’s sin (cf. [Rom 5:12-14](#)). All humans inherit Adam’s sin nature; therefore, all humans are slaves to death.

(17) *Through what “one man” does life “righteousness reign in life?”* We have life and righteousness through Jesus.

(20) *What was the purpose of the Mosaic Law?* The law came to point us to our sin (cf. [Rom 3:20](#)). [Rom 5:12-14](#) explains that death was the consequence of sin before the giving of the law (cf. [Gen 2:17](#)), but the law instructed us about sin.

(21) *Instead of death, what now reigns in our life through Jesus?* Grace (the free gift) reigns in our lives.

How did Jesus overcome sin and death on our behalf? Jesus defeated sin and death through His death and resurrection. [Hebrews 2:14-15](#) “14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” **Jesus defeats sin and death on our behalf.**

Devotion to God

What do we devote to Jesus? Because of Jesus’ victory over sin and death, **we devote ourselves to Him**. [Romans 6:10-14](#) “10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves **dead to sin** and **alive to God** in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not **sin therefore reign** in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present yourselves to God** as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For **sin will have no dominion over you**, since you are not under law but under grace.”

(12) *What should we refuse to reign over our lives?* We should not let **sin** reign over us. Christ has defeated it.

(13) *What should we present to God since we are freed from sin?* We should present **ourselves** to God. Notice the contrast of [Romans 6:11](#) “11 So you also must consider yourselves **dead to sin** and **alive to God** in Christ Jesus.” This is a good summary of devotion to God. We devote ourselves to God by ongoing repentance (dead to sin) and ongoing obedience (alive to God) (cf. [Rom 6:15-23](#)).

Conclusion

What we read in [Joshua 5:13-6:27](#) is that **God gave Israel victory over Jericho; therefore, they devoted everything to Him.**

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. My greatest enemy is Jimmie Decker. I cannot overcome my sin, but Christ has overcome my sin. **God gives us victory; therefore, we devote everything to Him.**

In closing, listen to Paul's words about his struggle against sin and Christ's victory over his sin. [Romans 7:15-8:1](#) "15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing ... 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."