

The LORD instructed Joshua to use an unorthodox strategy to take the city of Jericho, one that required none of the usual military tactics for penetrating a city's defenses. Instead, it required the children of Israel to trust in the LORD and depend on His power to give them the victory.

1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

This verse is parenthetical for it gives us a little more information about Jericho in the midst of the narrative. The phrase "straitly shut up" is translated from two Hebrew words which are different forms of the same word meaning "to shut." The indication is that not only were the city gates closed but every measure had been taken to secure the city from invaders. No one was allowed to enter or exit the city lest some invader were to use it for an opportunity to slip in. The city was built on a hill, which put potential invaders at a disadvantage. Also, the wall of the city had a double wall construction consisting of an inner wall 12 ft. thick and an outer wall 6 feet thick. These factors usually caused attackers to choose the strategy of besieging the city for months in order to force surrender through starvation. Jericho had prepared itself for just such an attack.

2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, *and* the mighty men of valour.

The previous verses (in the previous chapter – Josh. 5:13-15) describe Joshua encountering "the captain of the host of the LORD" near Jericho. As he falls on his face in worship, he asks what the "man" has to say to him. Some commentators see vs. 2-5 as a continuation of this encounter as the captain of the host of the LORD gives Joshua instructions for taking the city of Jericho in response to Joshua's question. Notice that the LORD did not say "I will give into thine hand Jericho..." Victory was already an established fact in the mind of the LORD because He had decided it. Joshua had victory over not only Jericho (the people) but also the king and the warriors that were ready to defend it. All Joshua and the rest of Israel had to do was take it.

3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, *and* go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. 4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. 5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

"And ye shall compass [go around] the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days" – For six days the army of Israel were to mark around the city one time.

"And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns" – Seven priests, each carrying a trumpet made from a ram's horn, would march behind the army, followed by the priests carrying the ark. Following the ark would be the "rereward" (rear guard) at the end of the procession (vs. 9, 13).

"and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets" – The seventh day will be different than the previous six. Instead of marching once and returning to camp, Israel would march seven times around the city and at the end the priests would blow the trumpets. The priests would have already been blowing the trumpets during the march earlier that day and the previous days (vs. 8, 9, 13), but this final trumpet blast would be a signal.

"And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout" – It's not stated how the trumpets were to be blown prior to the final blast, but the final blast was to be a long one to distinguish it from the previous trumpet sounds. At the end of this trumpet blast the people were to respond with a great shout.

"and the wall of the city shall fall down flat [under itself; in its place]" – The walls would not fall outward like a tree falling; they would collapse straight down as the lower layers were crushed by the weight of the layers above. Archaeologists have confirmed that the walls of Jericho were indeed destroyed in this manner and the city was burned as the scripture describes (v. 24).

"and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him" – Instead of each Israelite soldier trying to enter the city through a hole in the wall or climbing over, they could simply charge straight into the city from where they were standing since the wall no longer existed.

6 And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.

Joshua now passes the instructions the LORD has given him on to the people. He begins by instructing the priests to carry the ark and have the seven priests carrying trumpets to marching ahead of the ark.

7 And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.

"And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass [go around] the city" – Joshua tells the people to start marching.

"and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD" – The armed men (the soldiers) will begin the procession ahead of the priests with the trumpets and the ark.

8 And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

The priests obey and join the procession: the priests with the trumpets follow the soldiers and began blowing their trumpets, followed by the priests carrying the ark. Notice that the priests carrying the horns “passed on before [*ahead of*] the LORD” (as represented by the ark).

9 And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, *the priests going on*, and blowing with the trumpets.

“And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets” – The writer summarizes the procession so that we understand the order. The soldiers went first, followed by the priests with the trumpets.

“and the rereward [*rear guard*] came after the ark, *the priests going on*, and blowing with the trumpets” – A rear guard of soldiers followed the priests with the ark and the trumpets, likely to protect the priests and the ark from attack from the rear.

10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall *any word* proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.

Joshua had previously commanded the people to remain verbally silent during the march each day until the day when he gave the command to shout. The only sound made during each march was the sound of the priests blowing their trumpets.

11 So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about *it* once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

The people obeyed, escorting the ark of the LORD around the city on the first day. Once the circuit was completed they returned to their camp until the next day.

Verses 12-19: Over the next five days the march of the first day was repeated, circling the city once and returning to the camp, until this had been done for six days. On the seventh day, Joshua and the people repeated the march again, but this time circling the city seven times. At the end of the seventh time the priests blew the trumpets with the long blast that had been designated as the signal (v. 5). Immediately Joshua commanded the people to give a shout of victory because the LORD had given them the city. He declared the city to be “accursed” and everyone in it, with Rahab and her family being the only exceptions. The Hebrew word for “accursed” means “devoted” or “dedicated,” meaning that the city and everything in it was dedicated to the LORD and so no one was to take anything from it for themselves. The gold, silver, brass and iron were to go into the treasury of the LORD and everything else was to be destroyed.

20 So the people shouted when *the priests* blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

Everything happened just as the LORD said it would. The priests blew the signal with the trumpets, the people shouted, and the walls miraculously collapsed, so that the people were able to run straight ahead and take the city. It’s possible that the verbal command by Joshua (vs. 16-19) had been given beforehand since the description in this verse seems to indicate that the trumpet blast alone was the signal for the people to shout. The LORD’s instructions also seem to imply this (v. 5).

21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

The Israelite army invade the city, destroying people and livestock. Anything of value (silver, gold, vessels of brass and iron) was taken for the treasury of the LORD.

Verses 22-27: The two spies from chapter 2 carry out the mission previously given to them by Joshua. They were to bring Rahab and her family safely out of the city as a reward for hiding them from city authorities. Meanwhile the rest of the Israelite army burned the city, totally destroying it and only taking the valuables for the treasury of the LORD. Joshua placed a curse on Jericho and anyone who would attempt to rebuild the city.