

Josh 5:13, 14, 15

Captain of host of the Lord

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

“*When Joshua was by Jericho* — Hebrew, *in Jericho*; that is, in the territory adjoining to it; whither he went to view those parts, and discern the fittest places for his attempt upon Jericho. *A man* — One in the appearance of a man. *With his sword drawn* — In readiness to fight, not, as Joshua thought, against him, but for him and his people.” (Benson Commentary).

“This Man was the Son of God, the eternal Word. Joshua gave him Divine honours: he received them, which a created angel would not have done, and he is called Jehovah, chap. 6:2. To Abraham he appeared as a traveller; to Joshua as a man of war. (Matthew Henry).

14 and he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.

“*Captain of the host of the Lord - i. e. of the angelic host, the host of heaven (compare 1 Kings 22:19; 1 Samuel 1:3, etc.). The armed people of Israel are never called "the host of the Lord," though once spoken of in Exodus 12:41 as "all the hosts of the Lord." The Divine Person intimates that He, the Prince (see the marginal references) of the Angels had come to lead Israel in the coming strife, and to overthrow by heavenly might the armies and the strongholds of God's and Israel's enemies.*” (Barnes’ Notes)

15And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

“It was a mark of reverence to cast off the sandals in approaching a place or person of eminent sanctity.” (Cambridge Bible)

“The very same order which God gave to Moses at the bush, when he was sending him to bring Israel out of Egypt, he here gives to Joshua for the confirming his faith, that as he had been with Moses, so he would be with him.” (Benson Commentary)

Research: Josh 6:1-4, 12, 16, 20 Joshua and Walls of Jericho

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

“Jericho was straitly shut up — They had shut up all their gates, and kept a very strict guard at them, for fear of the children of Israel” (Benson Commentary).

“Verse 1. - This verse (see above) is parenthetical. It explains why the captain of the Lord's host appeared unto Joshua. The inhabitants of Jericho, though in a state of the utmost alarm, were nevertheless fully on their guard against the children of Israel. The commencement of hostilities imposed a great responsibility on Joshua. Success at the outset was, humanly speaking, indispensable. (Pulpit Commentary).

“Straitly shut up - not only shut, but barred and bolted.(constantly and diligently)

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

*“As Israel had stood on the shores of the Red Sea and seen “the salvation of God,” so now they were themselves to adopt no warlike measures for the capture of the city, everything was to be done *for* them, not *by* them: the victory when achieved was to be one, “into which no feeling of pride or self-exaltation could enter.” (Cambridge Bible).*

“See, I have given into thine hand Jericho—The language intimates that a purpose already formed was about to be carried into immediate execution; and that, although the king and inhabitants of Jericho were fierce and experienced warriors, who would make a stout and determined resistance, the Lord promised a certain and easy victory over them” (Jamieson-Faucett-Brown).

3And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

“*e shall compass the city*] The scene to be witnessed from the walls of Jericho, was calculated in the most striking manner to appeal to the consciences of all who should see it:

- (a) First in solemn procession were to advance armed men:
- (b) Then would follow seven priests blowing continually, not the customary silver trumpets, but large horns:
- (c) Thus heralded, was to follow the Ark of Jehovah borne by the priests:
- (d) Then were to follow “the rereward” of Israel.

Six days was this strange procession to encompass the walls of Jericho, passing round in solemn silence, save for the long-drawn blasts of the horns. But on the seventh day, the city was to be encompassed seven times, and at the seventh the people were to shout, and it was promised that the city should “fall down flat,” and its destruction would be complete. “The ark of God, with the tables of stone from Sinai hidden within, was the genius, I had almost said the general, of that mysterious march: it was made plain by every token, that God, not man, was at work. Their priests were officiating, with the emblems of festival, not of warfare—“the trumpets of jubilee”—in their hands; before them armed hosts heralding, behind them armed hosts attending, the progress of the true Champion, the representative of the God of battles, to whose presence alone the coming victory was to be due.” Dr Vaughan’s *Heroes of Faith*, p. 253” (Cambridge Bible).

“The design of this whole proceeding was obviously to impress the Canaanites with a sense of the divine omnipotence, to teach the Israelites a memorable lesson of faith and confidence in God’s promises, and to inspire sentiments of respect and reverence for the ark as the symbol of His presence. The length of time during which those circuits were made tended the more intensely to arrest the attention, and to deepen the impressions, both of the Israelites and the enemy. The number seven was among the Israelites the symbolic seal of the covenant between God and their nation” [Keil, Hengstenberg].

4And 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.

“Trumpets of ram's horns - Render rather here and in [Joshua 6:5-6](#), [Joshua 6:8](#), etc., "trumpets of jubilee" (compare [Leviticus 25:10](#) note). The instrument is more correctly rendered "cornet" (see [Leviticus 25:9](#), note). Various attempts have been made to explain the fall of Jericho by natural causes, as, e. g., by the undermining of the walls, or by an earthquake, or by a sudden assault. But the narrative of this chapter does not afford the slightest warrant for any such explanations; indeed it is totally inconsistent with them. It must be taken as it stands; and so taken it intends, beyond all doubt, to narrate a miracle, or rather a series of miracles”

“The fall of Jericho cogently taught the inhabitants of Canaan that the successes of Israel were not mere human triumphs of man against man, and that the God of Israel was not as "the gods of the countries." This lesson some of them at least learned to their salvation, e. g., Rahab and the Gibeonites. Further, ensuing close upon the miraculous passage of Jordan, it was impressed on the people, prone ever to be led by the senses, that the same God who had delivered their fathers out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea, was with Joshua no less effectually than He had been with
(Barnes Notes).

8And 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.

“Wherever the ark went, the people attended it” (Matthew Henry).

“the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets . . . passed on before the Lord— before the ark, called "the ark of the covenant," for it contained the tables on which the covenant was inscribed. The procession was made in deep and solemn silence, conforming to the instructions given to the people by their leader at the outset, that they were to refrain from all acclamation and noise of any kind until he should give them a signal.

10And 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.” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown)

“**Ye shall not shout.** No sign of triumph was to be raised; but the Israelites, their priests, and the ark of their covenant were in solemn silence to encompass the city day by day, until they were commanded to raise the shout of victory.

“The people of Jericho knew only too well what this religious procession meant. As a military manoeuvre (so Calvin) it was worse than useless, it was ridiculous. It actually invited attack; nay, it afforded, if the interpretation in the note on ver. 8 be correct, an admirable opportunity for the slaughter of defenceless women and children by a sudden sally from the city.

“But the history of the Exodus was not unknown to the king and people of Jericho. The inspired law giver, with his miraculous powers, and his claim to direct intercourse with the Most High, was a personage only too well known to them, and his mission was only too sure a token of the Divine sanction which rested on their proceedings. His supernatural qualifications had evidently descended to his successor, and now it was terribly clear that this awful silent march, with the army equipped for battle, but not attempting to engage in it, the seven priests with their seven trumpets, the visible symbol of the Presence of the God of Israel, attended by the awestruck multitude awaiting the Divine pleasure, was but the prelude to some new interposition from on high, the mysterious foreshadowing of some hitherto unheard of calamity which should befall the devoted city.” (Pulpit Commentary).

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.

14 And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

“Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord—The second day's procession seems to have taken place in the morning. In all other respects, down even to the smallest details, the arrangements of the first day continued to be the rule followed on the other six.” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

15And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

“about the dawning of the day] On this day the circuit had to be made seven times, and therefore the march had to be commenced very early.

16And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

“ At the seventh time Joshua said, Shout — To testify your faith in God’s promise, and thankfulness for this glorious mercy; to encourage yourselves and brethren, and to strike a terror into your enemies. *The Lord hath given you the city —* It is given to you to be devoted to God, as the first (and perhaps the worst) of all the cities of Canaan” (Benson Commentary).

“On the seventh day - Most probably a Sabbath day. The rising early would be necessary to give time for encompassing the city seven times. Jericho appears to have been a city of considerable size and population; and each passage of the large host round it could hardly have taken less than an hour and a half. Thus, with the necessary intervals of rest, the evening would be at hand when Joshua gave the signal to shout [Joshua 6:16](#); and the work of slaughter was probably commenced just as the hours of the Sabbath were passed” (Barnes’ Notes).

20So 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.

“the wall fell down flat] No hand of man interposed to bring about this catastrophe, no merely natural causes precipitated the fall; *“by faith,”* as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, “the walls of Jericho fell down” ([Hebrews 11:30](#)). “When we examine the operation of faith in this instance, we shall see the point of the example to be in the refraining from action at the bidding of God. The impulse of nature was to attack the city; to try upon its bulwarks the skill of military science, as then understood, as by them possessed. The power of faith was shown in curbing that impulse; in submitting to an unexplained, unintelligible, severely trying, edict of inactivity; nay in consenting to play what must have seemed a ridiculous part, in the face

of a warlike and disciplined host, waiting to see what this intrusive, this presumptuous horde of rovers had to say for itself.” To escort the Ark, “day after day for a whole week, round and round the ramparts of Jericho, crowded doubtless with armed spectators; to do this with a ceremonial which could be imposing only to themselves—which must have been not so much mysterious as ludicrous to the established ideas of the world, and even to those ‘thoughts of the heart’ which are busy in all of us, and which are the peculiar property neither of Jew nor Greek—must have taxed to the uttermost farthing the loyalty, the religion, and the moral courage of Israel; we can scarcely explain it otherwise than by saying that it was ‘by faith,’ in other words, that their apprehension of the invisible rose above the counteracting influences of the present, and enabled them to say within themselves, ‘We ought to obey God rather than man.’” (Cambridge Bible).

“so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city; they went up to it from the plain, where they were, and entered it without any difficulty, the wall being fallen, and that everywhere: so that they went directly from the place where they were, and went in right over against them, into every quarter and, part of the city, and seized on it, and possessed it at once” (Gill’s Exposition).