

**The Uniqueness of the Bible #4**  
**Archaeological confirmation**  
**The Conquest of Jericho**

**Intro:** For several weeks I have spoken about the uniqueness of the Bible, the fact that the Bible is in a class by itself. If the Bible is, as it claims, the word of God, then it must be true in all that it says. It could not report an event as history and be in error in the details of that history. Historical sciences like archaeology have provided many check-points for the Scriptures' reliability. Today consider one example--the conquest of Jericho.

**The Biblical report of an Israelite invasion of Canaan that included Jericho!**

Jericho is located in the Jordan Valley about 10 miles north of the mouth of the Dead Sea. It grew up around a large fresh water spring, one of the largest in Palestine, and was at the crossroads between the Trans Jordan and the hill country of Palestine.

The Israelites had wandered in the Sinai wilderness for 38 years. Moses had been given a sighting of the land from Mt. Nebo and Joshua had been charged to lead the people in Moses' place.

*And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. "And you shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. "And it shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead." (Joshua 6:2-5)*

**The Discovery in Jericho**

*In 1930 to 1936 the city of Jericho was excavated by archaeologist John Garstang. What archaeologists discovered there is truly intriguing. Bryant Wood, writing for BAR included in an article a number of interesting discoveries made by Garstang.*

**The city was strongly fortified with houses on the wall.**

**The city was attacked just after harvest time in the spring.**

**The inhabitants had no opportunity to flee with their belongings.**

**The city fell to an enemy rather quickly (a short siege).**

**The walls of the city were leveled and had fallen flat (an earthen embankment surrounded the city).**

**The city was not plundered (many storage jar with charred grain were found)**

**The city was burned (layer of ash 3 feet thick)**

**"The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled**

with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt." (Kenyon)  
*Some later archaeologists have disputed these findings, but Garstang's conclusions have been defended by a number of archaeologists who believe in the traditional early date for the Exodus (1446 BC).*

### **What the Scriptures tell us about Jericho**

#### ***It was a fortified city***

##### A city with walls

*Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. (Joshua 2:15)*

##### A city with a controlled gate

*So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate. (Joshua 2:7)*

#### ***The city was attacked in the spring of the year.***

##### The Jordan was out of banks

*and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest),... (Joshua 3:15)*

##### The Israelites had just observed the Passover which is in the spring of the year.

*While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10)*

#### ***The inhabitants had no opportunity to flee***

*Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. (Joshua 6:1)*

#### ***The city fell to an enemy quickly***

##### For one week the Israelites marched around the city and then took it.

The narrative of Joshua does not suggest a prolonged siege of the city but a hasty victory.

*Then it came about on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. (Joshua 6:15)*

#### ***The walls of the city were leveled.***

The Biblical description shows that the Israelites did not enter the city at some breach in the wall as would have been characteristic of a siege; but instead each man went "straight ahead" indicating that they walls had been leveled.

*So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and it came about, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the*

*people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. (Joshua 6:20)*

When Garstang made this discovery he knew it was a remarkable thing. He and two other members of the team prepared and signed a statement describing what he'd found, saying, "As to the main fact, then there remains no doubt: the walls fell outward so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city. Why so unusual? Because the walls of cities do not fall outwards, they fall inwards!"

***The city was not plundered.***

The primary reason for conquering a city was not only to destroy an enemy people but to take their possessions. Yet the Scripture makes clear that God required the Israelites to refrain from looting the city they had conquered.

*"And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. (Joshua 6:17-18)*

***The city was burned with fire.***

In keeping with God's instructions the city of Jericho was burned. *And they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. (Joshua 6:24)*

**Conclusion: What the excavation of Jericho makes perfectly clear is that Joshua's account of the destruction of Jericho perfectly matches the discovery of 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeologists. Dozens of examples of this kind of correspondence between archaeological discovery and the Biblical record exist. What such evidence makes clear is that the Bible presents a reliable account of historical events from ancient times.**

**More importantly from a practical standpoint is the lesson it teaches us about faith. God gave clear instructions as to how the city was to be taken. The Israelites acted upon God's instructions and He responded by keeping His promise to give them the city. Cf. Heb. 11:30-31**