

## Joshua & Jericho - Part I



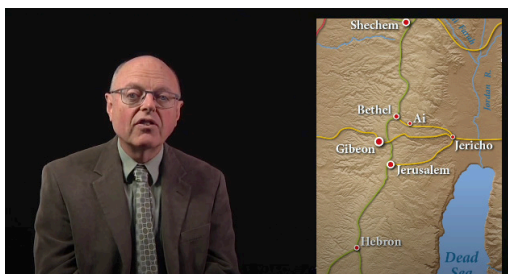
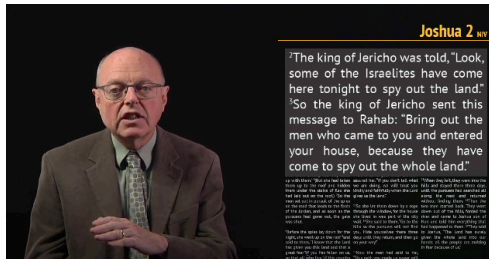
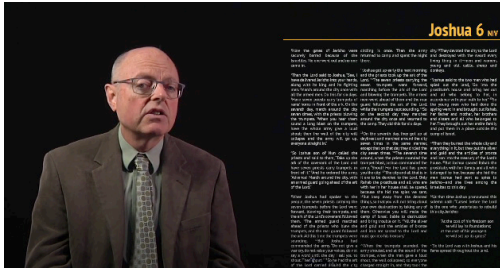
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In the last segment, we were talking about the cities in Canaan and what that meant and how the term *city* sometimes isn't what we think of a city today as. Remember that in Deuteronomy 20 this is what God commanded Israel to destroy. But as we look at the city and what we know of Canaanite cities from the time of Joshua, they are much more a fortified center. And we were looking at a city in the middle of the hill country in the middle of where Israel would settle, a city known as Shechem, which was there and had been a Canaanite city in that area and has been excavated archaeologically. Here we see, as we looked at the end of the last segment, the wall, or part of the wall that's fortified, and you see how big and strong it is to fortify against any enemies and protect that way.



So this is usually identified as the temple, the remains of a temple, which itself is a kind of fortified temple within the city of Shechem where people would have worshiped. In fact, it may be mentioned in Judges 9 as an example of what was going on during the time of the Judges, but it was there. And it is an example of the worship of other gods and goddesses that took place in these Canaanite centers. And this is an example of the gate. This is a fortified gate. You can just see the remains. Obviously it was much bigger and stronger, but even the foundations are massive. You could see the houses behind it of the modern-day Palestinian town of Nablus there, and have a sense of what it was like to live in this kind of city 3,300 years ago.

You probably didn't live there unless you were one of the elites: the king or the priest or the army and the army commanders. If you were one of the masses, you lived outside; and if you were attacked, this was a place you could come to for safety. Well, when we turn to Jericho, we don't have as much material leftover. In fact, there's virtually nothing that has remained from the time of Joshua of the remains of Jericho. There's nothing earlier than about the seventeenth or eighteenth century BC. That's the latest

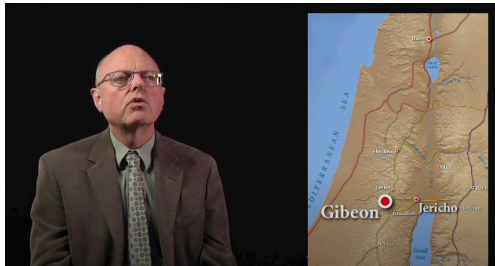


material. And that's hundreds of years before the thirteenth century BC. So whatever was there during the time of Joshua has been washed away or in one way or another has disappeared. But what we do know from the Bible is that this so-called city, which I think was actually more of a fort, and even much more of a fort than something like Shechem. Shechem was itself a fortified center, but this was a smaller fort, mainly military in purpose.

We know, for example, from the account in Joshua that it was small enough for Israel to march around it seven times in one day and to fight a battle in Joshua 6, as it describes Israel doing. If you have to march around it seven times in a day, and then still have light to fight the battle, it is not that large of a city. And as I mentioned, the site's name is Tel es-Sultan. It's small. It's probably the site of modern-day Tel es-Sultan or ancient Jericho. It's a few acres in size. And in the story, well, even earlier in chapter 2, in the story of Rahab, there in the opening verses, the king hears about the spies who have come and are now staying with Rahab; and he learns about it quickly. It has to take place within an hour or two; and such a learning about it and then responding by sending his agents there to Rahab's house is consistent with a small site. This is not a large, huge center. And we'll talk about why that may have developed in the stories that developed around Joshua.

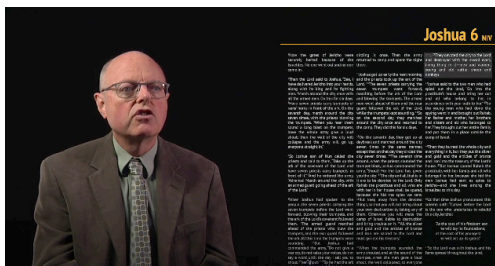
But Jericho was probably a small fort. It actually lay at the end of several main roads into the central hill country, the south road from Jericho. You'd cross the Jordan River, then you'd reach Jericho. Then from there you'd go on the south road to Jerusalem. That road was made famous by the story of the Good Samaritan in Jesus' accounts in the New Testament where the Good Samaritan met the injured man on the way to Jericho going back and forth between Jericho and Jerusalem. A second road, a sort of middle road, led up into the hill country to Bethel, modern-day Baytin near that Palestinian town.

And there was another road, a third road that went up into the hill country from Jericho. Jericho lay in the Jordan Valley, not far north of the Dead Sea and west of the Jordan River. This is one of the lowest points in the world, actually, that's not covered with water. It's one of the lowest valleys anywhere. And Jerusalem sits maybe two thousand feet above sea level. So you move across that area. You're going to rise very quickly. It's important. There aren't a lot of roads through that terrain, but there were several main ones and these all led to Jericho in the valley itself. So it was an

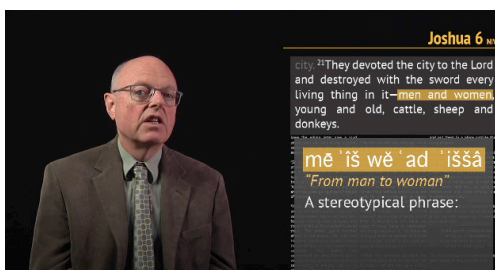


important center for trade for merchants traveling and for other groups who might travel; and we'll come back to that.

What else about Jericho? Well, in the Bible itself, there's no note on how large it was. As I mentioned, unlike Gibeon, which a few chapters later in chapter 10 is called a great city, an *'îr gedôlâ*, *gedôlâ* means great. And *'îr*, as we learned, means city or center, unlike Hazor in the north that Israel would fight in chapter 11 of Joshua, which was said to be at the head of all the kingdoms. And today we know that's huge. That site at the time of Joshua was maybe 170 or 175 acres. It was the largest site in all the area of Israel in Canaan in the south. No, Jericho's not described in this way. So Jericho may well have been a fort of just a few acres.



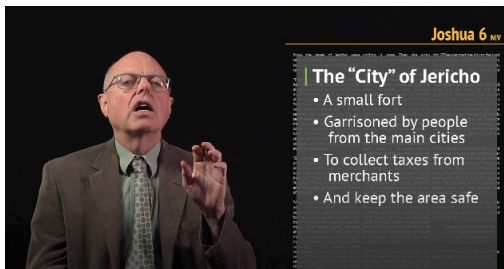
What about noncombatants then? Were there any? Well, we know, according to the account in Joshua, that Rahab and her family were preserved. And they were not warriors. They were noncombatants. But were they the only noncombatants? Well only two texts in Joshua imply otherwise. And these are often quoted with regards to Jericho, and then with regards to Ai; and chapter 6, with regards to Jericho, they devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword—that is, Israel did—every living thing in it, men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, and donkeys. And then also, in chapter 8, with regards to Ai, 12,000 men and women fell that day. All the people of Ai. Now, if you just take that the way it's translated, it certainly sounds like there were women in the city, there were children in the city, there were perhaps elderly people in the city. There were plenty of noncombatants there. But in fact, these texts, when we look at them more closely, don't necessarily explicitly say that.



The Hebrew phrase “men and women,” and also the one “young and old,” but we're going to look at men and women is actually in Hebrew, *mē'îš wē'ad 'îššâ*, which is from man to woman. It's not all the men and women. There are phrases in the Bible that are like that, that say everybody, all. And they explicitly identify men, women, children, whatever. But this doesn't quite say that. It says from man to woman. This phrase is used only seven times in the Bible. It's used at Jericho. It's used at Ai. It's used of Amalek when Esau goes out to kill and is to kill everyone from man to woman in Amalek. It's used at Nob when later Esau seeks revenge against David and kills all the priests and everyone in Nob in 1 Samuel 22. It's used in Jerusalem when David celebrates the bringing of the ark into Jerusalem and dances and everyone in the area gathers there from man to woman. And it's used of a general assembly of

Israel in Nehemiah 8, saying everyone gathered. And it's used of all Israel as well in 2 Chronicles 15, everyone was there.

Basically, in all the occurrences, this phrase is just used and is preceded or followed by the word in Hebrew for all or everyone. The only exception to this is the one in Samuel that says where Esau goes and kills. And he does this illicitly, and it's a real murderous act that he does. He kills everyone in Nob, and their children are explicitly mentioned. But elsewhere, this phrase is just used with the term *all* or *everyone*. And it's a stereotypical phrase for everyone in a town or region without assuming anything more about age or gender. It's a way of saying they killed everyone. It's not necessarily saying there were women in the city. It's not necessarily saying there were men in the city. There were people there, and they killed them. That much we know, but we don't know the text. The phrase, as it's used, doesn't actually indicate that there were noncombatants. It doesn't assume that. Therefore, in Jericho, when it says they killed everyone from man to woman, it means everyone in the fort. And in this case, I believe, as with Ai, I think it refers to the warriors. And Rahab and her family were exceptional because, I think, of what Rahab was doing there, and this explains why her house was on the city wall. And even perhaps why she was called a prostitute, because this was consistent with that of maintaining a kind of a hotel or inn where people could come and stay and spend the night safely in what was otherwise a kind of wild area.



And I think that Jericho is actually a fort manned or garrisoned by people, perhaps from the main cities like Jerusalem and Bethel and elsewhere with an army to collect taxes of merchants and others passing through, but also to guard and to keep safe that area at this time. That's one of the reasons there is very little and really nothing left from Jericho during the time of Joshua, because there wasn't anything exceptional there to be preserved. And when the city was destroyed, there wasn't anything left that would be indicative of say wealthier people who would preserve special kinds of pottery and things like this. That would be identifiable.

Well, I want to turn now to look at an objection to Jericho being a fort. If it's a fort, people will say, well, then why in the world is there a king there? Forts don't have kings. They may have commanders, but they don't have kings. Why would there be somebody called a



king like there is at Jericho? The term for king in Hebrew is *melek*. And why is he there?