

Joshua 6
Mercy Triumphs
Discussion Questions

As a backdrop, start by reading Genesis 15:16, Deuteronomy 9:5, and Leviticus 18:26-28, 26:11-12.

What do all of these passages suggest about God's view of the land? Who was really set to inherit it, and why? What are the warnings?

Now read Joshua 5:13-6-27.

- How does the interaction between Joshua and the Lord's Commander shape and frame the entire passage and even the conquest?
- If God's purpose is to mercifully make a space for his dwelling, how does this differ from merciless killing or genocide?
- What is some of the evidence of God's mercy here - for both those in Jericho as well as Joshua and his army? Give examples.
- How do we know that those in Jericho would have known that it was the God of Israel inviting them to turn to him?
- How should we view these conquest interactions in light of Jesus's call to love our neighbors and resist violent resistance against evil? Hint, Hebrews 8:6-12 may point us in the right direction.
- How has Jesus fulfilled this covenant conquest and opened up mercifully consecrated God's new dwelling? Where is this dwelling? What does it mean for us?
- What is God calling you to individually, us to corporately out of this new understanding of God's merciful consecration of his dwelling? How do we make a space, make room, welcome others into this mercy and rest of the Father's love?

Please take time to pray for one another and for these things specifically.

Some Helpful quotes/sources

"The purpose of the conquest wasn't to satisfy Israel's bloodlust or to provide a playground for military might. It was to create a sanctuary, a place of mercy and consecration where God could dwell in holiness among His people and eventually extend His redemption to the entire world." - Preston Sprinkle, *Fight: A Christian Case for Non Violence*.

"Those in whom the Spirit comes to live are God's new Temple. They are, individually and corporately, places where heaven and earth meet." N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*

6:3–4. seven days marching in silence. In the Ugaritic Epic of Keret (which would likely have been known to the people of Jericho) Keret's army arrives at the city of Udm and is instructed by the god El to stay quiet for six days and to shoot no weapons, and on the seventh day the city would send out messengers and offer tribute if they would leave.

Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Jos 6:3–4.

6:21–24. devoted to the Lord (*herem*). The “ban” is sometimes chosen as the English word to represent the concept of total destruction that is commanded here in verse 2 and elaborated in verses 5–6. Just as there were some types of sacrifices that belonged entirely to the Lord while others were shared by priest and offerer, so some plunder was set aside as belonging solely to the Lord. Just as the whole burnt offering was entirely consumed on the altar, so the ban mandated total destruction. Since the warfare was commanded by Yahweh and represented his judgment on the Canaanites, the Israelites were on a divine mission with Yahweh as their commander. Since it was his war, not theirs, and he was the victor, the spoil belonged to him. Although the divine warrior motif occurs throughout the ancient Near East, the *herem* concept is more limited—the only other occurrence of the term is in the Moabite Mesha inscription, but the idea of total destruction is also in the Hittite material. Some sites, such as Gezer, feature a distinct burn layer in association with the Late Bronze period. Under siege conditions sanitation is at its worst and disease is often rampant. The practice of burning everything after the defeat of a city thus also had an element of health connected to it. The best analogy for us to understand *herem* is to think in terms of radiation. A nuclear explosion would destroy many things and irradiate much more. The abhorrence and caution with which we would respond to that which has been irradiated is similar to what is expected of the Israelites regarding things under the ban. If radiation were personified, one could understand that once something was given over to it, it was irredeemable. It was this condition that Achan exposed himself to by taking things under the ban.

Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Jos 6:21–24.