

37 Jericho

Names (also known as)

The city of palm-trees

Etymology

Strong’s H3405 - yerîychô - perhaps ‘its month’. BDB = “its moon”.

Location/Description



A city 8 kilometers (5 miles) west of the Jordan and 11.5 kilometers (7 miles) north of the Dead Sea and the first city conquered by Israel upon entering the land of Canaan.

Jericho has a population of approximately 19,000. It is believed by some archaeologists to be the oldest continuously occupied settlement in the world. It is also one of the lowest cities in the world at 258 metres (846 ft) below sea level. It is situated in an oasis in Wadi Qelt in the Jordan Valley.

Famous characters

Joshua, two spies, Rahab, Christ, Zacchaeus, blind Bartimaeus.

Significant Scriptural references

There are 57 references to Jericho in the OT. The first is Num. 22:1 when Israel camp nearby before crossing the Jordan.

God gave Jericho into Israel’s hands when after marching around the city for 7 days and 7 times on the 7th day, the walls were undermined by an earthquake and fell down flat

(Josh. 6). The city was “accursed” (Heb. *cherem* - “devoted” to Yahweh) because it was the centre of Baal worship in Canaan. All the inhabitants and all the spoil of the city were to be destroyed, “only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron” were reserved and “put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh” (Josh. 6:24). Only faithful Rahab “and her father’s household, and all that she had,” were preserved from destruction, according to the promise of the spies (Josh. 2:14).

Jericho was given to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:21), and was inhabited in the time of the Judges (Jud. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5).

It is not again mentioned till the time of David (2 Sam. 10:5). “Children of Jericho” were among the captives who returned under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:34; Neh. 7:36).

Hiel the Bethelite attempted to make it once more a fortified city (1 Kings 16:34), and incurred the curse of Josh. 6:26. Between the beginning and the end of his undertaking all his children were cut off.



New Testament

In the times of Christ, Jericho stood some distance to the south-east of the ancient one, and near the opening of the valley of Achor. It was a rich and flourishing town, having a considerable trade, and celebrated for the palm trees which adorned the plain around. It was visited by our Lord on his last journey to Jerusalem. Here he gave sight to two blind men (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52), and brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus the tax gatherer (Luke 19:2-10).

Brief history

The history of Jericho goes back in antiquity a long way. The first fortification of the city was around 2900 BC. The city continued as an important trading post and stopping point on the journey through the Jordan valley and remains a viable commercial centre and a market town for local agricultural products such as dates, citrus fruits, and barley.

Its history has seen various populations living and ruling there, such as the *Hyksos*, or Shepherd Kings (1750–1580 BC), the Canaanites and today by Muslim Arabs.

In the 8th century BC the Assyrians invaded from the north, followed by the Babylonians, and Jericho was depopulated between 586 and 538 BC, the period of the Jewish exile to Babylon. Cyrus the Great, the Persian king, re-founded the city 1.6 km (1 mile) southeast of its historic site at the mound of Tell es-Sultan and returned the Jewish exiles after conquering Babylon in 539 BC.

Jericho went from being an administrative centre of Yehud Medinata ("the Province of Judah") under Persian rule to serving as the private estate of Alexander the Great between 336 and 323 BC after his conquest of the region. In the middle of the 2nd century BC Jericho was under Hellenistic rule of the Seleucid Empire.

The city came to be ruled by the Hasmoneans, following the success of the Maccabean Revolt, and remained such until the Roman influence over the area brought Herod to claim the Hasmonean throne of Judea.

Herod originally leased Jericho from Cleopatra, after Mark Antony gave it to her as a gift. After their joint suicide in 30 BC, Octavian assumed control of the Roman Empire and granted Herod absolute rule over Jericho, as part of the new Herodian domain. Herod's rule oversaw the construction of a hippodrome-theatre (Tel es-Samrat) to entertain his guests and new aqueducts to irrigate the area below the cliffs and reach his winter palace.

After the fall of Jerusalem to Vespasian's armies in AD 70, Jericho declined rapidly, and by 100 AD it was but a small Roman garrison town. A fort was built there in 130 and played a role in putting down the Bar Kochba revolt in 133.

Muslims, Turks and Crusaders all played a part in Jericho's history in the middle ages.

The first archaeological excavations of the site were made by Charles Warren in 1868.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Jericho came under the rule of the British Mandate of Palestine. The British built fortresses in Jericho during World War II.

Jericho was occupied by Transjordan during the 1948-49 Arab–Israeli War, but was captured by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967 along with the rest of the West Bank. It was the first city handed over to Palestinian Authority control in accordance with the Oslo accords.

The prophetic significance of Jericho for the latter days

In the majestic types of the Book of Joshua which between chapters 1 to 12 set forth the work of Christ at his Second Advent right through to the end of the Millennium in great detail, Joshua 6 is the Armageddon chapter.

It is a chapter of sevens – Jericho is mentioned for the 21st time in the OT in v.1. 'Shophar' occurs 14 times; 'seven' occurs 14 times; 'compassed' occurs 7 times, and there are 7 priests, 7 trumpets, 7 days, 7 times around the city in the overthrow on the 7th day which match the 7 seals (priests unseal the Word – Isa. 29:11; Mal. 2:7) - 7 trumpets, 7 vials (time cycles of Divine wrath since 1789), 7 thunders of the Apocalypse which are triggered by Armageddon (the gathering to which is the final event of the 6th Vial (Rev. 16:16) – Armageddon (commencing with the pouring out of the 7th Vial) is prefigured – a great earthquake occurs (Gog is overthrown by an earthquake), but Babylonian elements (foreshadowing Catholic resistance to Christ post-Armageddon) survive as they will for 40 years beyond Armageddon. The 4 metals of Nebuchadnezzar's image mentioned in Josh. 6:19,24 go into the treasury of Yahweh as the kingdom of men will be subsumed into the Kingdom of God. A total of 7 things (complete judgement) were destroyed in the overthrow (v.21) and Rahab's house preserved (v.22) as the remnant of Judah will be at Armageddon.

Sources:

Easton's Bible Dictionary, Wikipedia, New World Encyclopedia

The Apocalypse in Joshua study series

(Compilers - Ron Leadbetter/Jim Cowie)