

## Walls & Giants

Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann

West Valley Presbyterian Church

*“Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. 2 But the Lord said to Joshua, “I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. 3 You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. 4 Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram’s horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. 5 When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams’ horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town.”*

*Joshua 6:1-5*

### **The Walls and the Giants**

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho...maybe you’ve heard that song

#### **1. Joshua is a foreshadowing of Jesus**

**The Greek form of the name Joshua means Jesus...**and here in the Old Testament, Joshua is the one who leads the people to the promised land...

We call it the Promised land – the land of Canaan, because GOD PROMISED it to Abraham 600 years before...He told Abraham in

**Genesis 15:16 “In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here (and take the land of Canaan)”**

This is a big long story...spanning generations...this is the upper story... that only God can see from a birds eye view spanning generations...

Joshua is a foreshadowing of Jesus...he conquers in battle, and gets the people to the land of Canaan – a land flowing with milk and honey

Jesus does the same spiritually for us on the cross - conquers evil... prepares a place for us after we die in his kingdom" – "saves us from the bondage of sin" –

**With Jesus it is his overcoming darkness and evil on the cross that the wall of sin between us and God came tumbling down**

**With the people of Israel following Joshau - it is an actual wall around the city that collapses as they march around it**

Now what you have to get used to if you are reading the Old Testament are the wars/battles. I am sorry. If I were writing the Bible I would have made it a far more peaceful text.

But battles are in the OT scripture big time.

We don't like to read about God telling his people to go into battle and kill other people.

However, if you don't get used to this as a part of the ancient worlds culture and way of surviving you won't be able to get out of the scripture the essential message of the gospel – that **God goes into battle for his own.**

On a whole other level, which many of us would agree with, life is a battle against the Evil One who roams around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, Jesus tells us. That's why there is so much pain in the world and injustice.

So, if you can think of the Old Testament as a concrete living out of the story, that we now experience more in the spiritual life, it helps to understand some of these battles and conquests.

It also helps to know in this particular account of Joshua leading the people to take over Jericho, this city was a snake pit of horror.

Child sacrifice especially of first born sons happened all the time – it was rampant. For daughters, giving them to the pagan temple so that they could have a life of prostitution was common.

God did not like this...It was an evil city....

Deuteronomy 9:5 says, **“It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”**

## **2. Joshua Empowers the People To Act**

As we move further into this story of Joshua we have a significant shift in how God begins to relate to his people.

And this is so important for us to understand especially for us who have been Christians a long time.

Up until now it had all been about God’s miracles.

Miracles, provisions again and again making the Israelites able to survive.

**The Red Sea parts, the manna, the quail, the water from the rock, the pillar of fire and cloud, their sandals and clothes do not wear out, they were healed of snake bites and handed the 10 commandments miraculously delivered on a mountain.**

Why all the miracles?

Because the Israelites needed God to intervene for them.

They needed God to *do everything for them* because they were young still in their understanding of who this God was.

So God intervenes.

He makes a way...He does all this stuff for them so they can get out of bondage and be set free and recognize that I AM is God, and God has chosen them.

If God left it up to the people...they would still be in Egypt making bricks.

Tim and I are anticipating empty nest next year with Jonathan our youngest being a senior in high school this year

We are kind of looking forward to it actually

And I don’t know if this is common or its just our kids but right before they go to college...and this is happening with Jon right now as he anticipates leaving...they go into this weird regressive state

Its kind of like they want to go back to when they were young because they are feeling insecure about leaving

And this comes out in countless ways but here is an example of what I mean...

So we are sitting eating dinner, and I cooked it, and I had just sat down And Jonathan without even looking up says, "Mom, can you get me a spoon?"

And I just stared at him...and I looked at him and I say, "No way! How old are you? You are 18 and you look like you are 30 – go get your own spoon. You can do this on your own and then feel good about it after you did it. Let me empower you to walk to the kitchen."

Maybe when you were a year old I would get you a spoon so you could eat your baby applesauce – but no longer..

This kind of thing happened with all three of them right before they had to leave home.

It makes me go bonkers

So God has been with the Israelites all this time...taking care of them by giving them miracle after miracle because they were young, and new in getting to know this God of theirs.

Once they cross the Jordan though into the land of Canaan all of this stops.

No more manna or quail or pillar of fire. It is done.

It is now time for the people *to do something* to acquire the land. When they cross the Jordan they eat of the fruit of the trees there in Canaan – fruit that has to be picked, eventually harvested, and preserved.

Now it's not that miracles stop completely after they cross over the Jordan.

There are many, many, miracles after this that God performs. But there's a kind of a welding that happens under Joshua's leadership.

### **3. Joshua was a leader who welded together miracle and ministry**

Joshua welds God's miracles and the people's work or we might call it ministry... together.

The people now are asked and expected to be far more involved in what God is doing than they were before.

Its been forty years... This new generation has grown up in the wilderness and they have never not known reliance on God for manna and quail and water and guidance.

Its just been there for them from the beginning – since they were born into the wilderness environment

They don't know anything else

***So this new generation, with greater faith and reliance on God than their parents, are being commissioned and purposed to do things that will accomplish God's purpose and story - right along with God. And they do it because the wilderness has taught them well...to rely on him***

The people are now going to become more like co-authors with God in writing the story.

**Ministry is where you do all you can.**

**Miracle is when God intervenes supernaturally.**

**We need both...as we mature as Christians**

As we mature and grow in our faith we learn that we are called to do certain things to promote God's kingdom on earth.

It isn't just about sitting back and expecting a miracle all the time.

Or just praying to God when we need something

God is not a cosmic vending machine

We were in an airport recently and Tim wanted a package of those little bright orange peanut butter square crackers...

I am sure they are organic – cause that color is such a natural color

And he put the money in and nothing happened

And he banged on it and out fell a bag of sunflower seeds instead

And I said, "What's wrong with that machine?" You put your money in!

You should get what you want...

Sometimes we can say that to God...right?

I put my prayers up to you...I should get what I want

That's not the kind of relationship God wants with us – where he is a cosmic vending machine and our prayers are like change we put up into the slot so we can get what we want  
And then when we get something we don't want we get ticked off  
Except I think what he got – the bag of sunflower seeds was far healthier for him

He doesn't want that kind of relationship...he wants a cooperative relationship with his people...where we are engaged with him in doing his work here on earth...and we spend in time in prayer so that our will can be aligned with his...it's a different thing...

So just to recap...we are 40 years from where we were when the spies went out to survey the land.

As I said, you have a whole other younger generation who has been groomed in the wilderness to rely on God...

Joshua is probably about 80 or 85 years old – the same age Moses was when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea

Joshua also had been one of the spies, along with Caleb who said 40 years ago...*"We can do this...we can take the land."*

Joshua along with Caleb trusted in God way back then– they had faith– but were outvoted.

There was too much doubt and skepticism

The other spies said, "No we can't! The people are like giants...we are scared of them say the majority of the spies...their walls are like a fortress..."

So, because they trusted in what they saw, more than in God the Israelites went back to the wilderness and wandered ...

Its just interesting to note that **Joshua who had faith before – 40 years ago - is now the leader** – Moses has died.

To get to the promised land, Joshua has to cause the Jordan river to dry up – so there is a similar parallel to Moses here... Making the Red Sea dry up

(at the time that they took the city the Jordan river was just a torrent of water...very scary to cross)

So gracious! God keeps giving the people second third fourth chances – rewriting the story in the same way so they have multiple opportunities to get it right

(Joshua also must take off his shoes before an angel who appears to him – much the way Moses did in the burning bush)

Now in 40 years

What has changed here?

What stayed the same? Well...

Nothing really has changed about Jericho.

The people in the city of Jericho are still, big people like giants– they haven't shrunk in 40 years

*(But ironically, if you were listening to the scripture, these big Giants... are scared stiff of the Israelites...they have locked their gates because they know that Israel's God is a powerful God...)*

And Jericho was still known

for its enormous walls

It's the Israelites who have changed...they have been groomed in the wilderness...to trust God

So often wilderness experiences teach us to trust God more don't they?

I want to show you the walls of Jericho

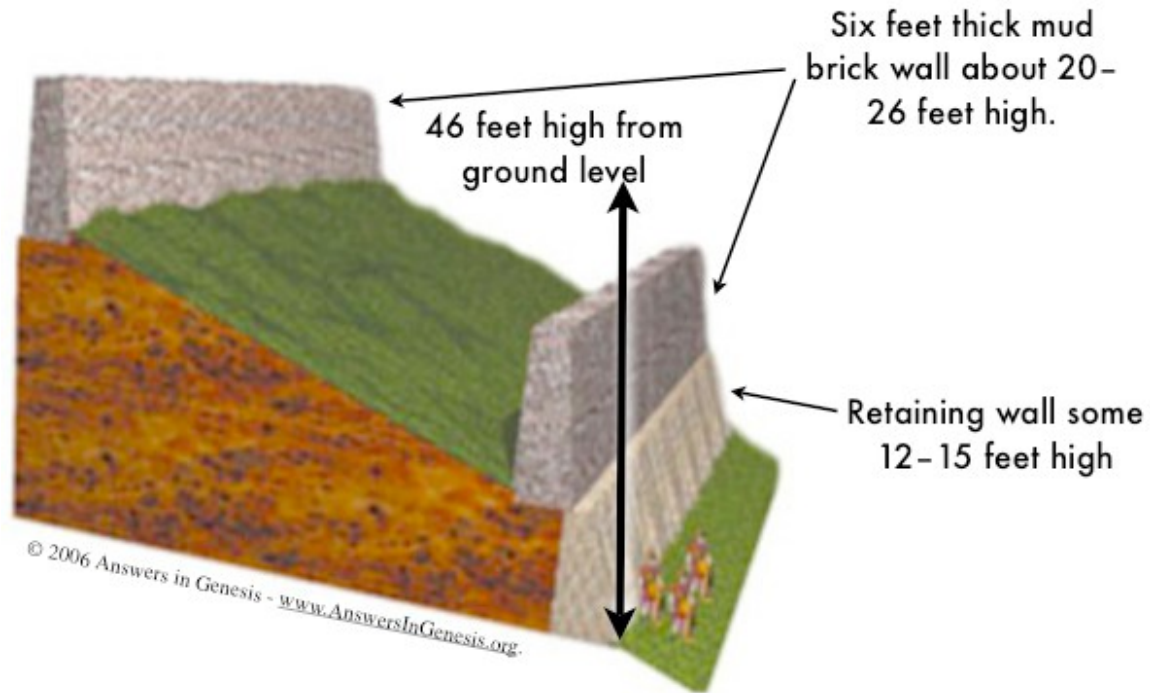
As I said, it was known for its ...big walls...

Here you have a diagram...

This is what archeologists think those walls looked like...they were impenetrable walls made so that no one could get in.

Recent archeological digs have evidence, based on the age of pottery found there that the Biblical account of this take-over at about 1440 BC is accurate.

There were other archeologists earlier who did not find the pottery and so assumed the Bible was wrong... But as I said recent evidence seems to indicate that Biblical account was correct.



The city of Jericho was built on a hill, surrounded by a great earthen rampart, or embankment, with a stone retaining wall at its base. The retaining wall was some 12-15 ft high. On top of that was a mudbrick wall 6ft thick and about 20-26 ft high (Sellin and Watzinger 1973)

At the crest of the embankment was a similar mudbrick wall whose base was roughly 46 ft above the ground level outside retaining wall.

Altogether Jericho was about 9 acres and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile around in circumference so the people could easily march around it. But this wall was enormous. They were walking around walls that were 46 feet above their head.

Talk about intimidating

Humanly speaking, getting past these walls was impossible.

The only other way to take this city strategically would have been to wait it out... But you know what Jericho had? It had a spring inside of it... so it was irrigated – it had plenty of water and the harvest had just come in - so the inhabitants had plenty of food.



So the walls really had to come down for the Israelites to take the city... they couldn't just wait cause the city was self-sufficient.

What scholars think happened was that this mud brick part of the wall (SLIDE STILL UP) fell over and it provided a ramp for the Israelites to walk on it – up and over the wall... into the city.

The Bible actually says that **The Israelites WENT UP into the city.**

There is also evidence of an earthquake at that time – so it could well be that God used an earthquake to bring these very imposing walls down.

But what I am struck by as I read this account is the faith of this new generation of Israelites

*Their ability to trust God and do what he said and watch the walls come down was not the way their parents reacted when God told them to do something outlandish that didn't make sense...*

And I want you to know **Today, God still knocks down our walls and he still takes on our giants**

But our faith in him, is key in overcoming those walls and giants in our lives

God tells the people four times in this story to be courageous as they become involved with God in doing all that they can.

**"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Ioshua 1:9).**

And they march with courage.

**Courage is not an absence of fear, but moving forward even though you are afraid to do the right thing.**

And the walls come down

**What walls do you have in your life?**

**Where do you need to have courage to get in step...march to the beat of Gods plan, so that those walls can come down?**

How is God calling you to take the walls that seem so insurmountable, on?

As I said, God doesn't just say to the Israelites anymore...here is the promised land...enjoy!

A land flowing with milk and honey – have a good time!

No. They have to work for it...they have to march around the city and choose to believe, even when their eyes tell them it is impossible...

They have to march, and shout, and blow their trumpets.

They have to trust and go forth in that faith.

Walls and Giants. Insurmountable odds.

And yet God brought down the walls, the giants were felled, and they entered the promised land...

*Bruce Ramirez is going to share with you a story about his own walls and how they came tumbling down because of God's presence in his life...*

(story)