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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

It was about eight years ago when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. At this time eight years ago, the Allied Forces were poised in Saudi Arabia ready to do something about it and there were a lot of bombing missions going on. Then on January 16, the Allied Forces moved and invaded Iraq. The battle was over in one hundred hours. That's pretty amazing isn't it especially when you study history and you know there was a war called “The Hundred Years' War.” We're talking about a war that took only one hundred hours and just about everybody in this room was alive when it happened. Well I've got one that can beat, because about 1,500 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem there was a battle—but I promise you it didn't last one hundred seconds. It's when the walls of Jericho fell down.

What we are going to see tonight is neither Joshua nor the children of Israel fought the battle of Israel. GOD fought the battle of Jericho and that's when the walls came tumbling down, because the battle was the Lord's.

As we're talking about the fall of Jericho, don't miss the spiritual, personal application of this. I want to go to the very end of the message right now and then I'll come back to it later. Today, when we are talking about the fall of Jericho in the Old Testament, I want you to ask yourself, “What is my personal Jericho? What is it in my life that stands as an obstacle keeping me from entering in to all God has promised to me?” It may be an inner Jericho; it may be a thought pattern; it may be a temperament; it may be a personality characteristic you have had with you for many years. It may be an inner Jericho that is keeping you from going on. You need to find out how the walls of your personal Jericho can fall down. It may be an outer Jericho. It may be something in front of you that somebody else has caused and you are the victim of it that is keeping you from going on and claiming God's promises. What's your Jericho? Tonight as we talk about how the old Jericho fell in the Old Testament, I hope that you are applying it to how your personal Jericho can fall.

I. GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER

As we lead up to the actual battle of Jericho, we need to get a running start and see how God prepared the people for this great miracle. The first thing we are going to talk about is the first thing God did before he ever sent them into Jericho: He demonstrated his power. Look with me, please, in chapter 3 of Joshua chapter 3, verse 5.

Joshua 3:5, 8. “Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’... ‘Tell the priests to carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.’”

I want to remind you that the Jordan River was at flood stage at this time. It had overflowed its banks and was at the highest it ever was during the year and God was going to perform a miracle.

Joshua 3:14-16. “So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during

harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) [we call it the Dead Sea today] was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.”

What was God doing? You have to remember this was a new generation. The old generation that came out of Egypt to Kadesh Barnea and had not trusted God and entered in, that generation that wandered in the wilderness for forty years, had all died out except for Caleb and Joshua. So God had to demonstrate his power to a new generation. Just as he made the waters of the Red Sea part for the children of Israel led by Moses to pass through, he was showing a new generation he was still powerful by causing the waters of the Jordan to stop.

You can learn about how faith operates in that chapter, because God said to the priests “Go stand in the river.” If somebody tells you to stand in the river, what does that mean to you? That means you are going to walk out in the water and you are going to stand in the water. The amazing thing is God did not stop the Jordan until they followed him and walked all the way up to the water. The Bible says, “it wasn't until their feet touched the water's edge that the water stopped.” I believe those priests trusted God so much, they would have kept on walking even though the water was up to their waists or even though the water was up to their chins. That's how much they trusted God. Our problem is most of us say, “Okay, God. When you stop the water and I see that the water is stopped, that's when I'll move forward. That's not the way you operate. God tells us watch this to walk to the very edge of everything we know and can see and feel and taste and touch and then he tells us to keep on going by faith and trust him!

That's like when Peter was in the fishing boat and Jesus was on the water. Peter said, “Hey, Jesus. I would like to walk on that water!” So Jesus said, “Step out, Peter and walk on the water.” What if Peter had said, “Okay, Lord. When I see that water turning into a concrete sidewalk then I'll throw my leg over the boat and I'll step out.” That's not what he did. Peter threw his leg over the boat and he put his foot on liquid water and he trusted the word of Jesus and he walked by faith. By the way, you know Peter was not walking on the water—he was walking on the word of Jesus Christ. A friend of mine once said, “I'm going to do that!” He went to a swimming pool and he said, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I'm going to walk on this water!” He stepped off and sank all the way to the bottom. The problem was Jesus had not told him to walk on the water and come to him. You can only walk on the water when Jesus invites you to walk on the water. So these priests were trusting in God and when they followed him and trusted him, he performed a miracle; He demonstrated his power.

II. GOD DETAILED HIS INSTRUCTIONS

In chapter 4 we learn something else—God details his instructions. He gave them some very interesting instructions as they were crossing over the Jordan River.

Joshua 4:1-3, 8, 20-24. “When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua. ‘Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the

priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.’...So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the Lord had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down...And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites. ‘In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground for the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.’”

God said, “I want you to pick twelve men.” Does that sound familiar? Where else did they pick twelve men? When they sent the twelve spies in the land. “This time I want you to pick twelve men and I don’t want you to send them as spies to check out the territory I want you to just do what I tell you to do! I want you to find twelve rocks as you are walking over this river bed pick them up and carry them with you.” Notice Joshua did not say, “Why do you want us to do that, Lord?” Apparently, not one of those twelve men said, “Rock? Why do we want to pick up rocks from the river?” They just obeyed the Lord. God was trying to get them ready to obey him even if they did not understand the commandment, even if they didn’t understand why they were doing it He said, “Just obey me!” That’s the point.

When God tells us to do things sometimes in the word, we look at it and we say, “Why?” That’s not the right response. We should just obey the Lord and not ask why, because God is trying to get us ready for even bigger and better things. A few years ago there was a series of movies called “The Karate Kid.” The kid, Daniel, asked Mr. Miyagi to teach him karate. So the master sends him out behind his house with a paintbrush and a bucket of paint and tells him to paint the fence! So Daniel works day after day painting the fence and complains saying, “I want to learn karate! I want to learn karate!” Mr. Miyagi just says, “You keep painting the fence.” What he didn’t realize was that while he was painting the fence, he was learning the right kind of moves for karate and he was building up his muscles in his hands and his arms and he didn’t even know it. Sometimes when God tells us to do simple things in the word of God, we want to look at and say, “Why would we do that? We want bigger and better things!” God is just training us. He is getting us ready. I think that’s why he told them to pick up twelve rocks. He wanted to see if they would obey him.

III. GOD DEPLOYED HIS ANGELIC ARMY

They crossed the Jordan River and then the third thing happened: God deployed his angelic army.

Joshua 5:10-12. “On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.”

They had been eating manna for forty years. God fed them and sustained them for forty years but God said, “I’m going to feed you milk. I’m going to feed you the simple things for a set period of time, but after that, there is a time when you move on and you begin to digest spiritual meat.” There are a lot of people who just want to keep eating manna. They want to be spoon-fed their entire lives. God said, “That’s not best. I want you to go beyond that.”

Then, an amazing thing happened.

Joshua 5:13-15. “Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, ‘Are you for us or for our enemies?’ ‘Neither,’ he replied, ‘but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, ‘What message does my Lord have for his servant?’ The commander of the Lord’s army replied, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so.”

So far Joshua thinks he is the general. He’s crossed the Jordan River and he thinks he has to make a battle plan. He knows Jericho is the most heavily fortified city of the ancient world. I can just imagine Joshua thinking ahead, “Let’s see. I need a hundred ladders. I need thirty battering rams. I’m going to need forty thousand spears. I’m going to need ten thousand archers and each one of them is going to have to have six arrows.” He’s planning the battle. As he’s planning the battle, suddenly he sees this warrior. He didn’t even recognize this warrior. He says, “All right. Who are you? Are you on my side or are you on their side?” It’s amazing what the warrior says. He says, “I didn’t come to take sides. I came to take over!” Joshua says, “Who are you?” The warrior says, “I am the commander of the army of the Lord.” The King James Version says, “The commander of the Lord’s host!” In the Old Testament, that reference is used about fifteen times and it always refers to God’s invisible angelic band of warriors—and this is the commander of this band of warriors.

Who is this warrior? Is he Michael? Gabriel? Is he some unnamed angel? Most believe this is one of those rare pre-incarnate visits of the Lord Jesus himself, and I tend to agree with them, because there were times when Jesus appeared before he was born in Bethlehem, and of course, this is before Bethlehem. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar looked in there and said, “Wait a minute! I thought we put three men in there! I see four in there and the fourth is like the Son of God!” I believe this is probably a pre-incarnate visit of the Lord Jesus because of what Joshua did: He fell down on his face before him! The only time we hear of that happening for an angel is in the book of Revelation when the Apostle John is being escorted around Heaven by an angel and you know what John does? John falls on his face before this angel and the angel is appalled! The angel says, “No! No! No! Don’t worship me. I am your fellow servant.” John was rebuked for falling down before an angel. But when Joshua falls down before this man, he is not rebuked. He doesn’t tell him to get up. Falling or bowing down before him is usually the reaction of most people when they encounter Jesus. The Bible says a rich, young ruler came before Jesus and bowed down before him. It says when the leper was healed he came back and he bowed down before him. Mary bowed down at the feet of Jesus Christ to anoint his feet and his hair. The Bible says in Revelation 1, when the Apostle

John does see the Lord Jesus in Heaven, he falls down on his face like a dead man. Joshua is worshipping this commander, this pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. We also know this must be God in the flesh, because the commander tells him, “Take off your shoes. This is holy ground.” The last time we heard that was forty years earlier when God spoke to Moses at a burning bush. “Take off your shoes. This is holy ground.” God was there, so the Lord Jesus was there! Anytime you have a battle to fight, you had better get on your face before God first, because the battle is won on your face and prayer. It is not won by trying to fight it out on your own.

So God had an army ready. By the way, it’s amazing to me to think that for forty years I believe this army had been ready. I think if the children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea had had enough faith to go on into the Promised Land, they would have encountered the same angelic army. For forty years they had been ready and finally, forty years later, Joshua sees they do not have to fight the battle alone. God has an army. In 2 Kings when Elisha is standing before the Syrian Army, it’s just Elisha and his one servant and a huge Syrian army gathered against him. The servant of Elisha, the prophet of God is terrified. “Oh, no, master. What are we going to do? We are outnumbered.” Elisha says the same thing. He says, “Don’t worry. They that be with us are more than they that be with them!” I can just imagine the servant looked at Elisha and then looked at himself and then looked at that Syrian Army and said, “Wait a minute, master. What do you mean that they that be with us are more than they that be with them? There are just two of us and there are thousands of them!” Elisha says, “Lord, open the eyes of my servant!” and God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant and he saw that the mountains were filled with the angelic warriors the chariots and the horsemen of God. I have quite a little interesting angle when I think that there is almost always an invisible presence of God’s mighty warriors around us. He deployed his army for the battle.

IV. GOD DIRECTED THE BATTLE

Number four God directed the battle.

Joshua 6:1-5. “Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the Lord said to Joshua. ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, [*past tense—it was a done deal*] along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.’”

The city of Jericho is recognized as the oldest continually inhabited city on the planet! An archeologist from Oxford University, Kathleen Pinion, did excavations there and has carbon dated extracts and remnants back to almost 10,000 B.C. So we’re talking about a city that had been there for centuries and centuries and centuries. To this day you can see the ruins of the walls. You can see civilization after civilization after civilization. It is believed that in about 1500 B.C. when Jericho was captured by the Israelites here as described in the Bible they had two walls. There was an inner wall about twenty feet high and six feet thick. There was a fifteen-foot space between the inner and outer walls, occupied by buildings and houses. The outer wall was

twelve feet thick and thirty feet tall. Do you want to get a handle on thirty feet tall? A basketball goal is ten feet high, so the wall was three times that height. It was by far the most heavily fortified city of the ancient world. Here come the children of Israel. They cross the Jordan River. They look at this city and say, “WOW!” Because during that time it would have qualified as the one wonder of the world! People would travel all of their lives just to get a glimpse of this huge walled city. Can you imagine the children of Israel looking at that, their eyes getting big and their jaws dropping? “WOW! How are we going to take that city?” God says, “Don’t worry. It’s a done deal.”

1. God’s instructions seemed strange

I want you to see three things that happened. First of all God’s instructions seemed strange; He said, “Don’t worry about spears. Don’t worry about swords and shields and battering rams. This is what I want you to do. I want you to walk around the city without saying a word. Then, I want you to go back to the camp and spend the night. The next morning get up and have some guards out in front you and have some priests with trumpets and have the ark and some other soldiers behind them. Walk around it again. Go back to your camp and spend the night. The third day do the same thing. Walk around it again and don’t say a word. The fourth day, don’t say a word just walk around the city again. The fifth day, don’t say one word just walk around the city again.

Put yourself there for just a minute. Imagine you are a resident of Jericho. The first day you are on the wall and have your spear, sword and your bow and arrow ready for a battle and you see this army approaching. It’s not even a full army; it’s just a portion of it. I’m sure they stopped just a little bit out of arrow range or spear throwing range and they just start walking around the city. Can you just see all the defenders of Jericho following them as the Israelites walk around the city saying, “When are they going to attack? Then they leave. The next day it’s the same thing. You see them coming up and get ready for battle and they just walk around the city again. I can just imagine by about the third or the fourth day these people in Jericho are saying something like, “Why those cowards we thought they were some great mighty army and they don’t even get close enough for a battle!” I can imagine by the third or fourth day they were hollering out “Chicken! Come on and fight! Let’s have a battle!” But the Israelites keep walking around the city. After the sixth day, God told them to do it a little different. “Walk around the city once, walk around the city twice, three times, four times, five times.” by the way the Jewish Talmud, which is a sort of commentary on the Old Testament, says it took them from sunrise to sunset to walk around the city seven times. It was a big city. All day long they walked. God said, “On the time you walk around it the seventh time let the priests blow a long blast on the trumpets and then everybody shout! When that happens, the walls will fall down.” Put yourself in the sandals of those soldiers of the Lord. You’re trained for battle! You want to go and fight and all you’re doing is walking around walking, walking, and walking. Then, on the seventh day you’re told to shout. Some battle plan, isn’t it?

2. The people obeyed precisely

Here’s the second thing that’s important, the people obeyed precisely. They did *exactly* everything God told them to do. They did not vary one iota. They did not walk around twice on one day; they didn’t talk or shout on the third day; they did exactly what God told them to do.

Do you want to have spiritual victory in your life? You and I need to do exactly what God tells us to do. The amazing thing is he was teaching them something, and I think it was patience. Patience is a great virtue. He was teaching them persistence. Don't you imagine they got tired walking around the city seven times in one day? Sometimes when God gives us these strange commands, he is trying to teach us something and get us ready for something great.

Do you know why God did the battle this way? So that he and he alone would get the glory and the honor so this is what happened. On day seven they shouted. It could have been, “Fall down!” It might have been, “Hallelujah!” We don't know. All we know is when they shouted, BOOM! the walls collapsed. Every archeological excavation of Jericho has determined that at one time in their history there was a catastrophic destruction of the city whereby the walls collapsed not from the outside in, but from the inside out. Because the people obeyed God gave them the victory.

3. God spared those who trusted him

There's one other thing I want you to learn. Even in the midst of this destruction, God spared those who trusted him. Remember Rahab? Every portion of that wall collapsed except for one house built in the wall— the house with the scarlet thread hanging out the window where Rahab and her family were.

That teaches us that whenever God sends judgement, he always sends an opportunity to be a recipient of his mercy and his grace. Sometimes people think it was awful of God to kill the firstborn child in every home in Egypt. You forget that any Egyptian could have chosen to sacrifice the Passover lamb and experience God's mercy. The same thing is true today. Every person has a choice to either trust God and receive his mercy or reject him and be a part of his judgement.

This all leads to one final question I want to ask you: What is your Jericho? Unbelief walks around and says, “Look how big this obstacle is.” But faith looks at all obstacles and says, “Look how big God is!”

CONCLUSION

Dr. Alan Redpath, who is a great spiritual mind, commented on Jericho.

“Why did the children of Israel walk thirteen times around that place in silence? I suggest it took that long for every one of them to realize that it was utterly impossible for them to capture Jericho if God were not with them. Thirteen big, long looks at the enemy until they became convinced that they were no match for those behind the wall. God made the Israelites walk around the great fortification until within themselves they died to every hope of conquest unless God should mightily and miraculously intervene. Is there a Jericho in your experience? You are conscious that God has brought you along in the Christian life and manifested himself in blessing to you, but there is still some Jericho that haunts you! The Jericho within your personality or the Jericho on the outside the greatest difficulty in the Christian life is getting to the place where you are prepared to

admit that the whole thing is too big for you and that the power of the enemy is too great for you! If your Jericho is to fall, then somehow God must bring it about! I believe that before God entrusts any of his people with a real measure of spiritual power, victory and blessing he brings them to a place where they have surveyed Jericho for so long that they have come to see that its conquest is absolutely hopeless. God expects nothing more from us than failure yet we spend years trying to make ourselves something other than a failure! So As long as we think we can do it in our own strength alone, the miraculous resources of God cannot help us.”

You may be looking at your Jericho thinking, “I can handle that! I can whip it. I can conquer that!” Oh, no you can’t! You’ve tried and you’ve tried and you’ve tried and you can’t do it. It is only by the power of God and faith that your Jericho will fall so, when you trust God and you obey God and you shout praises to him. BOOM! That’s when your obstacles will fall.

OUTLINE

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IV. GOD DIRECTED THE BATTLE

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3. God spared those who trusted him