

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL
the PROMISED *land*
GOD THE SAVIOR
The God of Unusual Victories

Our journey to the Promised Land picks up today with Joshua standing at the great crossroads of his life. Forty years before he had spoken in faith that the land could be taken by the Israelites. But that was when Moses was leading the people. Now, he was God's man in charge. He stood looking at Jericho, a well-fortified, well-armed city prepared for battle. Typical fortified cities of that time period had walls as high as 20 feet and as thick as eight feet. They could withstand a siege for months if they had food and water. Guards standing upon the walls in towers were prepared to shoot arrows, pour hot oil, or dump boulders on attackers.

I mentioned last week how appearances of Jesus on earth are found in several Old Testament passages. I believe that Joshua experienced one of those appearances. Wiersbe comments, "To Abraham the pilgrim, the Lord came as a traveler to share in a friendly meal. To Jacob the schemer, He came as a wrestler to bring him to the place of submission. To Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, He came as their companion in the fiery furnace, and to Joshua, He would appear as the Captain of the LORD's armies. Our Lord always comes to us when we need Him and in the way we need Him."

He is the God of unusual victories.

Read Joshua 5:13-15 (ESV) ¹³ *When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"* ¹⁴ *And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come."* *And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"* ¹⁵ *And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

The Jeremiah Study Bible reminds us that the Lord reveals His Presence in a person's life as the direct result of obedience. Joshua had just required the second generation of Israelites to be circumcised. Circumcision was a physical sign of the nation's covenant with God and its practice had lapsed among the people during their 40 years of wandering. Circumcision was a picture of what God's people were to do in their hearts. After the rites of circumcision were performed, Joshua then led the people to celebrate Passover before they went into battle for the purpose of remembering God's power. On the day after Passover, the manna ceased; a forty-year miracle ended.

We can only speculate as to what Joshua was thinking about as he looked towards Jericho – most likely he was praying. When Joshua saw the Man standing with a drawn sword, Joshua did not shrink. He courageously asked, *Are you for us, or for our adversaries.* The Man's answer indicates that He would not

choose sides. *No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD.* When we choose to follow Jesus – the Commander of the Lord’s Army, we are on the right side! **Romans 8:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

The LORD had already told Joshua in **Joshua 1:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* The Commander’s response to Joshua to remove his shoes reminds us of Moses’ experience at the burning bush. God promises victories over His enemies.

Read Joshua 6:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.* ² *And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.* ³ *You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days.* ⁴ *Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.* ⁵ *And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.”*

God’s plan for the conquest of Jericho would appear foolish by human standards. How could the walls fall down flat with marching and a shout? Paul explained in **1 Corinthians 1:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;*

Jericho was strategically located. It was right in the middle of the land of Canaan. Some might wonder why Joshua would take the most fortified city first. Besides being obedient to the LORD’s direction, Joshua was a gifted military strategist. Once Israel destroyed Jericho in the heart of Canaan, enemy forces would be unable to come together in a coalition against Joshua’s army.

The number seven has been called a symbol of perfection. God does a lot of things in sevens. There are seven days in a week. There are seven feasts of Jehovah. There were seven sayings from the cross. The number seven is found 54 times in the book of Revelation. The Israelites marching around the walls of Jericho every day for seven days is a significant reminder that we must daily be obedient to God even when we feel as though we are only going in circles!

Jericho represents the world to the believer. It is strong and formidable and foreboding -- the conquest depends upon faith. **1 John 5:4 (ESV)** ⁴ *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

Like at the crossing of the Jordan, we see the priests involved in the battle plan. The Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of the Lord with His people. Israel could march and the priests blow trumpets until all of them dropped from weariness; but if the LORD wasn’t with them, there would be no victory. The mighty men of valor accompanied the priests as they marched around the city. There was something that everyone was instructed to do and it just might have been the most difficult thing of all to do.

Read Joshua 6:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ *But Joshua commanded the people, “You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.”*

These folks had a family history of grumbling. They were instructed to remain silent! And here at Jericho the people were obedient and did as they were commanded – they kept their mouths shut until they were told to shout!

The people prepare for victory over God’s enemies and obey.

Read Joshua 6:15-21 (ESV) ¹⁵ *On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.* ¹⁶ *And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.”* ¹⁷ *And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.* ¹⁸ *But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.* ¹⁹ *But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”* ²⁰ *So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.* ²¹ *Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.*

Ordinarily the soldiers shared in the spoils of war but not at Jericho. The things of Jericho were to be presented to the LORD as the firstfruits of victories to come. Keep in mind that nothing was to be taken for personal use. To do so, would be disobedient. And, yes, someone did take something and the entire nation would pay for the disobedience of one person. But, that will be next week’s lesson. This week’s is all about the unusual victory. The walls of Jericho fell down flat.

Some say that archaeology proves the accuracy of the Bible which records the walls of Jericho fell down flat. Others say that archaeology disproves the Joshua 6 account. Let me tell you what I know about the event. **Hebrews 11:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.* What God’s Word says about the event is all I need to know. It was a miracle just like it was a miracle when God hung the stars in space!

God delivers a remnant from His enemies.

Read Joshua 6:22-25 (ESV) ²² *But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.”* ²³ *So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.* ²⁴ *And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of*

bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, Joshua sent in two men into the land most specifically Jericho to spy out the situation. Why would Joshua send in spies? He knew better than anyone else that sending in spies had not worked 40 years before. Yes, this was a new generation of people. And yes, Joshua was a military strategist and undoubtedly that must have figured in his plans. However, I believe that the LORD had a different plan in mind for this 'spy adventure.' The two men 'uncovered' a heart who was open to the LORD in the midst of Jericho of all places! And the person they found was what most would consider an unlikely candidate to join the Israelites. Rahab knew that the LORD had given the Israelites the land. Rahab knew that the LORD had dried up the Red Sea for the children of Israel to cross. And most importantly, Rahab knew this: ... *for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.*
Joshua 2:11 (ESV)

We tend to judge people. Before her preservation, Rahab had been a harlot or prostitute, but we need to remember our Jesus is always a friend of sinners.

When the walls of the city fell down, it appears that the section of the wall that held Rahab's house didn't fall down! Rahab had been instructed to hang a scarlet cord in her window. Oh! How she must have been counting on the scarlet cord as the Israelites continuously encircled her city. She was counting on a promise and a scarlet cord to save her and her family picturing how we today can rely on the promise of God and the blood of Jesus to save us.

Some people are bothered that Rahab lied to save the spies. I think it's remarkable that she was willing to put her own life at risk by lying to protect the people of God. Yes, the Commander of the LORD's army could have saved the spies in some other way but He gave her this opportunity to stand with the LORD's army.

Another thing that people are often bothered about is the LORD ordering the Israelites to kill every living thing. In the first place, all of us are promised death because of our sin. The land of Canaan was a very wicked people and would not provide 'good company' in order to build a holy people. Also, we need to remember that the people of Canaan had been given plenty of time to repent – from the time of Abraham to the time of Moses. When the LORD told Abraham that his descendents would dwell in Egypt for 400 years, He added in **Genesis 15:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*” The LORD was delaying their judgment giving them more time to repent. Even this generation of Canaanites had had 40 years knowing the Israelites were coming and yet they failed to get right with the Living God. Rahab knew death was coming and she trusted God in faith for her salvation. And as faith would have it Rahab's name is found in the genealogy of Jesus on Joseph, his earthly father's side. Because Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, shared the genealogy, we know that all who come to Jesus by faith, become a part of the family of God – no matter their sins of the past.