

Joshua 5:13-6:5; Joshua 6:20 (New International Version) The Fall of Jericho

¹³ 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?"

¹⁴ "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 ^[a] have for his servant?"

¹⁵ 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.

Joshua 6

¹ Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

² Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³ March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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."

²⁰ When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city.

"The LORD is on One Side..."

- I. With sword drawn, he topples walls...
- II. With sword drawn, he builds them, too...

"*What a band wagon jumper!*" we say. The team can be at the bottom of the division, and they jump off quicker than a wink. Can anyone really be loyal to two teams? What if they play each other? Who will you cheer for then?

Joshua knew that the man standing there when he looked up was different than anyone that he had ever seen. What a responsibility he had been given: to conquer all the cities of the land that the LORD had sworn on oath to give all the way back to Abraham. And having the Jordan River come apart crying out in joy that the sons and daughters of Israel, the LORD's chosen, were there to cross over into the land of promise, this could have seemed to be quite easy. But Jericho was stubborn. The conquest was at a stalemate. No one went in, and no one came out. A huge wall separated the Israelites from their first real test. And behind that was a king clothed in earthly splendor and strength with his mighty war men protecting it on every side.

It was important to know who this guy was, and what he was there for. He stood with sword drawn, as if ready to fight. And Joshua asked him the question, "**Are you with us, or with the enemy?**"

We know from later verses, that this is the LORD himself. It's one of those special times that God sent his Son, Jesus, the LORD, strong and mighty in battle, in human form before the date of his birth. And from the answer we know that the LORD is not just a Broncos fan or Packer's fan. He's not on the U.S.'s side or Afghanistan's, during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was right, "*We both pray to the same God and read the same bible,*" when talking about the North and the South. These are all earthly things. His response, "**Neither,**" was truth because he is **on One side**. He's on mankind's side because he's on God's side, and so he's on your side, and he's on your neighbor's side, and he's on the side of the man sitting in prison or in the office. His love is for all of mankind, and his sword is drawn for the purpose that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth of their life and salvation through that very sword of his word of promise.

The soldier in battle wears armor and weapons. They drive large tanks or in their day, chariots, showing the power and strength of their army and conquest. The messenger is not armed and not powerful—often a child giving a message. The LORD Jesus, strong and mighty in battle shows his strength in his drawn sword, but he never lifts a

real one up during this conquest. It's simply the word from his mouth that does the tearing down or the building up. And it's true in what is said, "**The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword.**"

And with sword drawn, he topples walls. He shows Joshua his sword, but it is the word of his mouth that does the real, lasting work. Inside and outside the walls were souls bought by the work that he had yet to come to do, and inside of each of the groups were those who indeed were lost, lifting up their souls to idols and false gods and trusting in the power of their own human strength, and doing whatever they pleased, sinning against the commands of the LORD who gave them to us and to them for a peaceful and good life to protect us and give us joy. And to the people behind the wall, the sons of Israel themselves were messengers with a powerful sword wielding message.

In the words of Rahab, the only survivor together with her family from this destruction of Jerico, the people behind the wall knew all too well how the LORD had brought such signs and wonders to destroy Egypt because they refused to let these people go. They knew how the waters of the Red Sea had obeyed the word of the LORD and parted to rescue the Israelites, but then swallowed up strong Pharaoh and his army. And for all of them who living in this pagan land had lifted up their souls to idols, earthly devastation was the least of the problems for them, for them, it was about eternal destruction separated from the God who could save them. The Lord Jesus, commander of the armies of the LORD would tear down the wall from around their heart and move them to, "**Call on the name of the LORD,**" and as it was promised, "**they would be saved.**"

Hearing the sword coming from the LORD's lips, the command was simple: All the people walk around the city for six days. On the seventh, the priests, of all people were to blow on ram's horns standing at the foot of the ark of God, the place where the LORD made his dwelling known amongst his people. Inside it were only a musty book and a staff, and jar of manna. And on that seventh, hearing the sound of the horn, all the people were to give a war cry. That's it. Yet, for those six days, for in six days, God created the earth and the world and all that exists, the people of Jerico must have been scared to death at the doom that was coming up them.

It was time to fear. It was time to turn to the LORD one final time. And the word of the LORD, that drawn sword of promise, causes walls to topple over. Not the ram's horns. Rediculous. Not the shout. Not one sword, nothing but the LORD's word of promise and sure enough, the wall fell as we're told from the bottom up, like a Las Vegas casino of the 1950s being imploded to make room.

The LORD's patience still stands in these days for all who stand against him through their indifference or their arrogant self-righteousness, people like you and me. We stand behind the wall shuttering when like sharks circling is the message of sin and what it does to us, whether illness or disease, the results of our own sinful mistakes or willful disobedience, and eternal separation and punishment in hell, and at the sound of the horn and the war cry, the LORD will invade and will judge the living and the dead. God be praised that the creation of time exists for us to turn to the Lord Jesus who with neither sword nor chariot would come from this line of people and set us free by war cry, "**It is finished, paid in full!**" So your sins and mine are separated from us as he promises with the sword of his mouth, "**as far as the east is from the west.**"

Where his sword is drawn, take your sandals off. For the place where his word and sacraments are, there is a holy place, a Kadosh, place, set apart from all the other places and things that are here in this world. For there his sword of promise builds walls up, too.

He builds the wall of confidence around us. At his word of promise, he will deliver what he has promised. Many religious talks on television love the book of Joshua because of the idea that, "*all you have to do is...*" The burden rests on you to do it, get rich, get well, get clean and sober, or conquer a city or a workplace or whatever it is. But what is lost is the LORD, strong and mighty in battle who delivers on his promise. There is no promise of God that says, "*I have given Las Vegas into your hands! Just go and win.*" There is none that says, "*I have given your career into your hands to make big money.*" Here there is the true promise from his lips, "**I have given into your hands this city,**" because of his promise on oath to Abraham and his descendants. And believing his promise, they would carry out his directives.

What wimpy things to do. Conquer the city by walking around it. Conquer the city by blowing on ram's horns. (like that Metrodome Viking horn). Conquer the city by giving out a war cry. All were ridiculous, and not one army in their right mind would use the battle plan or those weapons. The LORD showed that his sword, the word of his mouth, would build for them a wall of confidence in his promises. It would show them that what he promises, he certainly carries out. Before they even stepped foot into the land, while still in the wilderness, while still in Egypt—he had given them this victory. And his choice of tools was to show that this victory was not theirs, but the strength of his might. After seeing what takes place, would they ever doubt his promise again?

And he builds walls of confidence around us as well. "Just the say the word," "Get up and walk." And he who has the ability with a simple word to make the lame walk and sick well, has at his disposal the same power to say, "Your sins are forgiven. You are not going to die." He says coming from ark of his sure and certain promise built on the tomb of the 1st day of the week, "Even if he dies, he will live." And the wall of our confidence in every battle that we face is

built that, "the angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him." "With the LORD your refuge, then no harm will befall you, and no disaster will come near your tent."

And it's our trust in his promises that delivers us the city, delivers us from death and the devil and has toppled the wall that separated us from the promised-land that he has prepared. "I have given into your hands the right to come into this city of glory and there you will dwell." And your life of service reflects that you believe his promise and obey his commands. And he will do what he has promised.

Which side are you on? To our God be glory and honor that he is on our side, and because he is, our wall is secure forever. That makes us give out the war cry and give a blow to the ram's horn shouting, "I'm on the LORD's side." Amen.