



CAN WE TAKE JERICHO? (Sermon)

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Purpose: Demonstrate that as the people of God, we are capable of doing more than we have in the past, or even more than we think we can do.

Introduction

Jericho – a formidable Canaanite fortress. Ten of twelve Israelite spies saw it and came back with a frightening report. “The land we...explored,” they reported, “will devour anyone who goes to live there” (Numbers 13:32 NLT). On top of that, they testified, “we even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers” (v. 33). “Their cities,” they said, “are very large and well fortified” (v. 28 GNT).

A well-fortified city was prepared for defense. Archeologists tell us that “[Jericho] was surrounded by extensive defensive walls strengthened with rectangular towers.”¹ “So,” the Bible records, “they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites” (v. 32 NLT).

Two spies, however, came back with a different message.

I. Is It Possible to Take Jericho?

We don’t know exactly who they were, but two spies hid out in a home along the Jericho wall. The lady of the house, Rahab, related that the power of the God of Israel was no secret to the Canaanites. “We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed” (Joshua 2:10 NIV*).

The original spies gave a frightening report regarding the city defense systems and size and ferocity of the inhabitants, adding their opinion that they back off on any plans to attack the Canaanite residents.

Rahab gave these two spies an entirely different report: “When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below” (Joshua 2:11).

Whatever the source of their intelligence, the opinion voiced by Caleb in Numbers 13:29— “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it”—was far more accurate.

It all depended on the attitude and resources used by the Israelites.

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jericho>

“Jerichos” Are Everywhere!

Facing a “Jericho” is nothing unique. Your Jericho can be anything from some personal issue or someone you would like to target with the gospel message. The question is whether or not we can conquer the current Jericho we face! Often, we do not realize how the Lord has already paved the way for the conquest of a “Jericho” we face.

How God Dealt with the Canaanites

Rahab had good reason to believe that her city named Jericho would be conquered by the Israelites.

The Amalekites, probably the brand of Canaanite that inhabited Jericho, was a tribe descended from Esau’s grandson. During the time of Moses, the Lord instructed him to record that “I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven” (Exodus 17:14).

God recorded that He would deal with the Canaanites in three ways:

1. Using the forces of nature: “I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way” (Exodus 23:28).
2. Confuse their thinking: The experience of Gideon and the loaf of bread dream is an example of this (see Judges 7:13, 14).
3. Implant fear: “The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them” (Exodus 15:15-16).

So, the way was paved to conquer Jericho, even though through many Israelite eyes it was impossible. It is curious that the pagans thought it was possible to conquer Jericho, but the followers of Lord didn’t think so!

As far as Rahab was concerned, Jericho was a lost cause, even if it was still standing!

II. The Power of God and a Sign of Hope

Within the “Israelite Intelligence Service” of the time, only two agents saw any hope. Within Jericho itself, one lady recognized the internal atmosphere of despair and fear unknown to the Israelites. She asked for an assurance that she and her family would be safe when Jericho was inevitably conquered.

1. The first component of “doing more” is to present people with the gospel message: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the *eternal gospel to proclaim* to those who live on the earth” (Revelation 14:6). Rahab had already seen evidence of what that “eternal gospel” could do.
2. Rahab asked only for assurance of salvation: “Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death” (Joshua 2:12, 13).

The scarlet rope—the color of blood—worked for Rahab much as the blood of the Passover lamb had worked during the exodus. God’s mercy and forgiveness of Rahab was signified by a rope of scarlet thread, which becomes a symbol of the blood of Christ.

The Sign of Hope Works Miracles

With the Lord on our side, there is always hope we can take to Jericho.

- Job 11:18 - “You will be secure, because there is hope.”
- Proverbs 23:18 – “There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

Author C. S. Lewis wrote, “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither.”

Whatever your Jericho is, hanging out that scarlet cord (the sign of the plan of salvation) makes all the difference. Suddenly, Jericho becomes conquerable.

III. Jericho Across the River

We Adventists have a special assignment – present to the world the message of the gospel and the message of the soon coming of Jesus. Jericho or no Jericho, the message will go. It is delivered by flying angels blowing trumpets and “crying with a loud voice.”

Moses had been in a similar situation. The Lord called him to a seemingly impossible venture. Moses had no desire to accept.

Ellen G. White writes: “But Moses still entreated that a more competent person be selected. These excuses at first proceeded from humility and diffidence; but after the Lord had promised to remove all difficulties, and to give him final success, then any further shrinking back and complaining of his unfitness showed distrust of God. It implied a fear that God was unable to qualify him for the great work to which He had called him, or that He had made a mistake in the selection of the man.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 254.

The Lord gave Moses only one weapon, his own shepherd’s staff, called a “crook” because of its shape.

The staff turned out to be a powerful weapon in Moses’ hands empowered by the Lord. It caused plagues. It stopped plagues. It stopped counterfeit power plays by fake magicians. It parted the Red Sea. It got water out of a rock.

Jericho Trembled and Israel Wondered!

Joshua 3:5 – “Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.’”

The next morning the Israelites started the crossing. The Jordan River was only about 100 feet (30 mt) wide and about 10 feet (3 mt) deep opposite Jericho.²

To show He was with them, the Lord performed the “amazing thing” Joshua had mentioned the day before: “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...while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho” (Joshua 3:15, 16).

Jericho’s Last Week

Jericho didn’t know it yet, but its last week had arrived. The Israelites didn’t know it either, but Joshua had big plans in mind. Assume you had been there, and the plans (resources) were similar to what we have available today. They are all designed to help defeat Jericho. All a congregation has to do is use them. Who or whatever your Jericho is, your church has the resources available to help you bring it to its knees!

Day 1 – Sunday

Israel crossed the Jordan. They decided to do something after all – they felt the inspiration, the motivation, and the power. They held what we would call an “all night prayer

²<https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/wide-deep-jordan-river-israel-crossed>

meeting” — a revival that does the same as the Lord said to the Israelites, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you” (Joshua 5:9).

Joshua got together with an angel and started an intercessory prayer ministry that spread to the tribes camped near Jericho. They built a couple of altars as a memorial for future generations to show what the Lord had done to conquer Jericho – **But Jericho was still there!**

Day 2 – Monday

The priests armed the camp with the power of God, and they marched, trumpets blowing. The inhabitants of Jericho saw it, and “The gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in” (Joshua 6:1) - **Jericho was still there!**

Day 3 – Tuesday

They marched again! Get involved in the “I Will Go” initiative started by Joshua’s leadership group. Maybe some of his archers shot arrows over the wall with Bible studies attached to them! Your church can do the same. Church members of all age levels can share Bible study ads through their cell phones, email, and social media platforms. These ads can be anything from simple phrases to prepared ads offering free Bible studies. It’s a start — **But Jericho was still there!**

Day 4 – Wednesday

They marched again, trumpets blasting. This time it was a prayer walk around the neighborhood. One of their women prophets on the prayer walk named Ellen G. White declared, “Success does not depend upon numbers. God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 550).

Inside the city, something was happening. Rahab got her family together in her house. She hung out the scarlet cord. Salvation was getting closer. The Canaanites were more and more frightened. God was empowering His people and scaring the heathen. The stage is set! **But Jericho was still there!**

Day 5 – Thursday

They marched yet again. Some people were probably impatient — wondering why Jericho was still there. All those Canaanites looking over the walls! Face to face with the enemy.

That same lady prophet spoke up: “The Lord has no place in His work for the indolent and self-indulgent. The men of His choice were the few who would not permit their own wants to delay them in the discharge of duty” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 549).

Someone suggested they organize a Discover Bible School to be ready to give Rahab and her family Bible studies. Maybe they could invite relatives of the original “mixed multitude” within their own ranks who were still not totally convinced about the Israelite religion. **But Jericho was still there!**

Day 6 – Friday

They marched again! – will this never end? We are using all these resources. We are doing our best. Joshua just preached a great sermon on the text “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Nice words – **But Jericho was still there!**

AND THEN IT WAS SABBATH!!!

Conclusion

We Adventists can do more. Yes – We can take Jericho. NOW is the time to march!

*Bible texts are taken from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.