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“WALLS”

The subject of a ðWallö has become a center of political controversy. This past month I thought it would be of interest to build a sermon around the subject of wallsö not as a political statementö but by simply taking a closer look at some of the Bible verses that mention walls.

Walls are mentioned in the Bible about 250 timesö from Genesis to Revelation (Gen. 49:6; Rev. 21:19).

Walls are normally constructed of solid materials. But what about a wall of water? In their escape from Egyptian slavery, under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites ðwent into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a **WALL** unto them on their right hand and on their leftö (Exod. 14:22).

One of the most striking scenes in the classic 1956 movie ðThe Ten Commandments,ö was when the sea opened up with a wall of water on the right and left, allowing the Israelites to pass through. When Pharaoh and his armies attempted to do so, they drowned.

Years ago I heard about a woman who went to see ðThe Ten Commandments.ö She exclaimed: ðI never knew what Moses looked like until I saw that movie!ö © Fortunately most realize that Hollywood productionsö even movies about the Bibleö are not a basis on which to build doctrine!

Also back in the 1950s, there was a series of comedies featuring ðFrancis the Talking Mule.ö While not intended to depict a biblical scene, there is in the Bible an account of a donkey that was given the power of human speech (Num. 22:22-35).

As the disobedient prophet Balaam rode his donkey through vineyards (which commonly featured wallsö Isa. 5:1-5), ðthe

Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a **WALL** on this side, and a **WALL** on that side. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the **WALL**, and crushed Balaamö foot against the **WALL**” (Num. 22:24).

Balaam became so angry he beat the donkey and would have killed her. Then the LORD allowed the donkey to speak with a human voice, saying in effect: ðWhy are you beating me and being so cruel? I would not do this to you. Have not I always taken you where you wanted to go?ö Suddenly Balaamö eyes were opened so that he, too, saw the Angel standing in the way.

After the Israelites had come out of Egypt, twelve spies (one from each of the twelve tribes) were sent to check out challenges they would face in the Promised Land. Upon their return, they confirmed it was a land of milk and honey, *but* their cities were “**WALLED** up to heavenö (Deut. 1:28, KJV). ðWalled up to heavenö was a figure of speech for very high walls. Even today we may describe a very tall building as a öskyscraper,ö but no one supposes it literally scrapes the sky!

Ten of the spies had a ðbad reportöö they spoke of ögiantsö there and that they felt like ögrasshoppersö in comparisonö which spread fear and grief throughout the camp. But *two* of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, believed they should press forward and possess the land, despite the high walls and obstacles (Num. 13).

When they finally did enter the land, they had to deal with the walls of Jericho. But, öby faith, the **WALLS** of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven daysö (Heb. 11:30; Josh. 6:20). The story is well known. Some will recall the words of a negro spiritual:

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho,
Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
And the walls come tumbling down!

You may talk about your men of Gideon,
You may brag about your men of Saul,
Thereö none like good old Joshua
At the battle of Jericho!

There was a house built on the wall of Jerichoö a house of prostitution, operated by Rahab. öHer house was on the city **WALL**” (Josh. 2:1,15). People there had heard öhow the LORD dried up the water of the Red Seaö for the Israelites. Consequently, Rahab believed God was with them and helped in the overthrow of Jericho. She is listed in the Faith Chapter (Heb. 11:31). Her life turned around, she married an Israeliteö Salmonö and became the mother of Boaz, placing her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ! (Matt. 1:5, Ruth 4:20-22, etc.).

Back in the 1960s it was not uncommon for radio preachers to send out öprayer clothsö (based loosely on Acts 19:11,12). But one preacher offered something more unique: *a red string!* He *supposedly* found biblical support for this because Rahab displayed a scarlet red cord (Josh. 2:18, 21). He claimed this red string (which he offeredö for an offering, of course!) would cause people to lose weight, maybe even *instantly*.

I knew a large woman who sent for this red string. She told me she tied it around her waist to lose weight. It did not work for her!

Leprosy, mentioned quite a few times in the Bible, was a horrible disease. We recall that Jesus cleansed ten lepers, but only oneö a Samaritanö returned to thank him (Luke 17:12-18). So we know *people* had leprosy. But could a **HOUSE** get leprosy?

In Fresno, back in the 1970s, there was a television program conducted by some churches that supposed they alone were the ötrueö church. A panel of their pastors sat

at a table, with Bible in hand, ready to answer questions that were phoned in. I phoned and asked if a *house* could get leprosy, citing Leviticus 14:34. One man on the panel quickly responded: “*People* get leprosy; a *house* cannot get leprosy! About that time, the man next to him (having looked up the reference), tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Well, it does say here....”

Once the Israelites would settle in the Promised Land and build houses, Moses outlined a procedure to be followed if a house got *leprosy*. The owner would go to the priest and say, “It seems to me that there is some plague in the house.” The priest would then go and examine the house. “And if the plague is on the **WALLS** of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish, which appear to be deep in the **WALL**, a certain procedure was to be followed to rid a house of leprosy. It is all spelled out in Leviticus 14:33-57.

Music has long been recognized as having a soothing effect. There were times when King Saul acted like a crazy man, and David playing on a harp would calm him down (1 Sam. 16:23). But on one occasion, Saul had a spear in his hand. “And Saul cast the spear, for he said, ‘I will pin David to the **WALL!**’ But David escaped” (1 Sam. 18:10,11).

Later, of course, David became king and was successful in defeating his enemies. On one occasion he knew what to do because he heard “the going in the mulberry trees” (1 Chron. 14:15). Another time he said: “For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a **WALL**” (2 Sam. 22:30). Apparently neither a troop of soldiers or a city wall could hold him back!

This verse always brings to mind something that happened when I was about 15 years old at Riverside (California). A man was preaching that he, like David, had heard “the going in the mulberry trees” and that he, by God’s power, could run through a troop and leap over a wall. With this he leaped off the platform, ran up one aisle, across the back of the church, down the other aisle, leaping back on the platform didn’t miss a word! That place really came alive!

“Who smote Abimelech [a son of Gideon]? Did not a *woman* cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the **WALL**, that he died in Thebez?” (2 Sam. 11:21). These words referred back to an incident that happened many years before.

Turning back to the historical account, we read: “But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man his armor bearer, and said to him, draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, ‘A WOMAN KILLED HIM’” (Judges 9:53-55).

Here was a man facing *death*, but who was, seemingly, *more concerned* that someone would say a “woman” killed him!

It is interesting how people of one culture or time may have strong feelings as to what is disgraceful or embarrassing. People of another generation or culture may have different feelings or concerns.

Here is another example: Because he did not trust the servants David sent, “Hanun took David’s servants, shaved off *half* of their beards...and sent them away...they were *greatly ashamed*.” So David told them, “Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return” (2 Sam. 10:4,5).

As the Medes and Persians were advancing to overthrow Babylon, during the drunken, pagan festivities of the occasion, there came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote upon the plaster of the **WALL** of the king’s palace; and the king [Belshazzar] saw the part of the hand that wrote” (Dan. 5:5). The spooky “handwriting on the **WALL**” contained a mysterious message no one there could understand. The astrologers and the soothsayers of Babylon could not explain it (verse 7). Had Jean Dixon, Edgar Cayce, and Nostradamus been there, they would have been baffled also. But then Daniel revealed the meaning: it was a message of doom for Babylon.

To a people who refused to repent, Amos warned that disaster from the hand of God would be “as if a man did flee from a *lion*, and a *bear* met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the **WALL**, and a *serpent* bit him” (Amos 5:19).

When I read this verse about a serpent in the wall, I think about the missionary work of Bob Williams (1910-2009), affectionately known as “Borneo Bob.” Beginning in the late 1930s, he took the gospel to the wild head-hunters of Borneo. It was a difficult mission, but in time thousands came to Christ because of his efforts. We cherish the times of fellowship we had with him in his later years. To honor him on his 90th birthday, I wrote an article which included the following, given in his words:

“We found an old house that had been deserted years before by a Chinese trader that was now in a state of semi-collapse. The owner agreed to let us use it for a mission station, but he made no mention of the tenants who were occupying it at the time. These tenants were snakes! everything from tiny (but deadly) vipers, to pythons and cobras. We never did get entirely rid of the snakes, but not one of us was ever bitten.”

Not long after the conversion of Paul, he began preaching in Damascus that Christ is the son of God. Unbelieving Jews watched the gates of the city day and night, planning to kill him. “Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the **WALL** in a basket” (Acts 9:20-25).

We don’t even know the *names* of those disciples, yet by holding that rope they were instrumental in saving the life of Paul who would go on to write a large portion of the New Testament and whose ministry would impact the world!

Later Paul would write what, at the time, was revolutionary truth: that Jews and Gentiles are ONE in Christ. “For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle **WALL** of partition between us” (Eph. 2:14).

Numerous differences existed between Jews and Gentiles. Some Jews supposed their standing with God hinged on being descendants of Abraham (Matt. 3:9). The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9).

Even in the early church among Spirit-filled Jewish believers and leaders, long-held prejudice lingered for a while. A Jew was not to enter the house of a Gentile or eat with him (Acts 10:28; 11:1-3) things like that. But as the old was passing away, and the new was coming in (cf. Heb. 8:13), a better understanding emerged: Salvation is by GRACE, not RACE.

“For there is *no difference* between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom. 10:12). δ RW

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