

[R3086 : page 299]

GRACE SUFFICIENT; ONLY BELIEVE.

– JOSHUA 6:12-20. – OCTOBER 19. –

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." – Heb. 11:30.

AFTER ENTERING Canaan the covenant of circumcision was renewed by the Israelites. Evidently their long journeying in the wilderness, because of unreadiness to enter into Canaan at the first, was to be understood by the Israelites as a period of partial disfavor with the Lord; hence both the circumcision of their children and the annual commemoration of the passover ceased during that period. The renewal of both when they had entered Canaan marked the return of divine favor and evidenced their more acceptable condition of faith toward God. Another change occurred: the manna, the bread from heaven on which they had fed for thirty-nine years, ceased after they had gotten into Canaan and had eaten their first passover there.

They were now ready to take possession of the [R3086 : page 300] land which God had given them, and were encamped near the city of Jericho, which occupies a sort of key position to Canaan from the direction of their approach. Joshua, the new leader, evidently had in mind the necessity of prompt action against Jericho, and was, no doubt, considering the fact that his army had no implements suitable for attacking such a walled city defended by well armed men, even though the latter were comparatively few in number. It was while on this reconnoitering expedition that he met an angel of the Lord with drawn sword in hand, who, in answer to his question, informed him that he was the Captain of the Lord's hosts. Joshua, after doing reverence to him, received instructions how he should proceed for the capture of Jericho, and our lesson details the manner in which those instructions were followed out, and the great victory resulting. – Joshua 6.

We have already seen that the land of Canaan prefigures the Millennial Kingdom with its rich blessings which may be secured by all who, under the command of the greater Joshua – Jesus and his glorified Royal Priesthood, desire to be the Lord's people. The renewal of circumcision on entering the land, would thus signify that one of the first institutions of the Millennial Age will be a consecration to the Lord – to put away sin, to live separate from sin as the Lord's assisting grace will enable. The renewal of the passover would symbolize that in the Millennial dispensation the important work of redemption by the precious blood will again be brought prominently to the attention of all who desire to be God's people, and that they can only be his people by a full recognition [R3087 : page 300] of the Lamb that was slain, and by an eating of his flesh – partaking of the mercies and blessings flowing from his sacrifice. The ceasing of the manna, and the eating, instead, of the fruits and grains of Canaan, may be understood to signify that the new dispensation will have spiritual food and sustenance of its own, and that in great variety and abundance; and that mankind will no longer be dependent upon the divine revelation contained in the Scriptures – upon the Word of God through ancient prophets and apostles. Good and necessary as these are under present conditions, they cannot be to the world all that the more direct teachings and blessings and instructions and guidance of the Millennial Kingdom will be, and will, therefore, not be needed under the new conditions. Now, the Word of God is a lamp for the feet of his saints, and some of its light shines beyond his saints to others in this night time; but by and by, when the Sun of righteousness shall arise and the whole earth be flooded with the glorious light of truth and knowledge, the lamp which at present we cannot prize too highly, will cease to occupy its present exalted and indispensable position, although it will always be appreciated and revered.

Another thought respecting Canaan: we have already noted that the Royal Priesthood may in some sense of the word be said to be already in the land of Canaan throughout this Gospel age – by faith – already in the place or condition which Israel after the flesh and the

mass of mankind "entered not into because of unbelief." (Heb. 4:3,6,10.) To this class, Jordan would fitly represent consecration unto death; and Canaan would represent our present newness of life while still in the flesh. To these, the circumcision represents, as the Apostle explains, circumcision of the heart and putting away of sin from the wills; to these the passover signifies not only the acceptance of the merit of Christ's atonement on our behalf, but also a communion and participation with him in his sacrifice. These, as justified persons, having been fed with the manna from heaven, have been strengthened and brought across Jordan; and now as new creatures they live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" – they live upon the divine promises – "Thy words were found and I did eat them." (Jer. 15:16.) To these the capture of Jericho and all the battlings with the Canaanites represent victories of the "new creature" over the flesh; not accomplished by their own strength, but accomplished for them by the Lord in recognition of their faith and trust in him.

The capture of Jericho was accomplished in a peculiar manner; the methods which, by the Lord's command, Joshua adopted, would certainly appear foolish. For six days the armed men of Israel were to pass around the city, one time each day, followed by priests bearing the ark of the covenant and by other priests tooting with rams' horns, keeping time as they marched. The program on the seventh day was the same except that the armed men and the priests bearing the ark and others with the trumpets passed around the city seven times, and that when they had passed around it the last time the priests with the rams' horns ceased their tooting and gave a long blast upon the horns which was the signal for all the people of Israel to give a shout as they had previously been directed by Joshua according to the Lord's instructions. It required faith on the part of Joshua to issue such instructions; it required faith on the part of the armed men of Israel and of the priests to carry out their part of the program which seemed so senseless, so little likely to effect anything against the city which was to be captured; it required faith on the part of all the people to expect that when these procedures had been accomplished and the

final long blast on the trumpet had come (v. 5), that the walls of Jericho would fall down flat. No doubt it was part of the divine program thus to develop and test and strengthen the faith of Israel, and to teach them that the victories they were about to gain would not be in their own strength or might, but by the Lord's power.

Just how this would apply during the Millennial age we may not yet clearly discern; but we are sure that in some manner the lesson will be given to all who then desire to come into harmony with God, that the power of sin, its fortresses and entrenchments in the fallen race, cannot be overcome without divine assistance, and that reliance upon God and obedience to the great Captain of the Lord's hosts will be essential to every victory. The royal priesthood who have already entered, by faith, into the favors or privileges of the Millennial Kingdom (forgiveness of sins and harmony with the Father and blessings as new creatures), already realize the lesson, that sin is so **[R3087 : page 301]** thoroughly entrenched in their fallen human nature that it can be overcome only by divine power. All through the present time the royal priesthood sound the trumpets of warning against sin, and declare themselves as "new creatures" opposed to it, and announce that ultimately it must completely fall; and during the Millennial age this same priestly class, glorified, will still sound the trumpet note of obedience to God and opposition to sin, and in harmony with their instructions they shall finally sound a great blast, and all who are on the Lord's side will join in, and by the Lord's grace the power of sin will be utterly overthrown, its walls will fall down flat, and no longer constitute opposition, and every one who is on the Lord's side will be energetic in the complete destruction of sin not only as relates to his own person, but as respects the utter extermination of sin in every form and in every phase.

The people were told in advance that the entire city was condemned of God; that he had taken the matter in charge and that they were merely to execute the divine decree against that city in its utter destruction and the extermination of every living thing therein,

all of which combinedly symbolized evil. The only things that were not to be destroyed either with fire or sword, were the metals, such as gold, silver, etc.; and these were not to be appropriated by the Israelites, but were to be considered the Lord's. Special caution was given, and the warning that any violation of these terms would bring a corresponding curse upon the person or persons offending and upon the whole camp of the Israelites wherever the condemned things should be found.

Thus during the Millennial age the general lesson will be that sin must be exterminated utterly, and whoever shall seek to hold on to any portion of it will thereby bring a corresponding curse upon himself as did Achan in this instance for securing to himself a "wedge of gold", and "a goodly Babylonish garment."

The lesson to the royal priesthood now, as well as to the world in the Millennial age, is that the Lord requires not merely an outward conformity to his Word, but a heart loyalty to him, which will enter fully into sympathy with righteousness and into hatred of iniquity – otherwise the penalty will be the Second Death, as symbolized in the destruction of Achan.

In respect to the slaughter of the people of Jericho, we must remind our readers of the points in our previous lesson in which we showed that the people thus put to death were not cast into an eternity of torture, but that they merely died with probably as little, or less, pain than if they had been smitten with some lingering disease; and that they have a share in the divine mercy and a provision in the great atonement which the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, is accomplishing for the sins of the whole world, and which will shortly be finished and permit the blessing of all the families of the earth through their Redeemer.

Just a word respecting the miracle of the overthrow of the walls of Jericho. It was a miracle, however it was to be accounted for, as is demonstrated by the connecting facts, the order of the procedure and

the particular time, shout, etc. Doubtless God, in the accomplishing of this miracle, used some natural means as in other instances. Possibly an earthquake may have been caused at that particular spot, so as to affect the walls without affecting or alarming the people of Israel but a short distance outside of the city. Another suggestion offered is that there is a dynamic force in certain chords of sound which as yet is but slightly understood, and that it is possible that the Lord operated along the line of this law but little understood by us, for the accomplishment of the overthrow of this wall, using the sound-chord of the long blast, and of the voices of the people, in conjunction with the marching. This does not seem to us a very reasonable view of the matter, nevertheless we give some curious incidents cited, as rather confirmatory, by those who favor such a view. These illustrations follow: –

"All structures, large or small, simple or complex, have a definite rate of vibration, depending on their material, size and shape, as fixed as the fundamental note of a musical chord. When the bridge at Colebrooke Dale (the first iron bridge in the world) was building, a fiddler came along and said he could fiddle it down. The workmen laughed in scorn, and told him to fiddle away to his heart's content. He played until he struck the keynote of the bridge, and it swayed so violently that the astonished workmen commanded him to stop. At one time considerable annoyance was experienced in one of the mills in Lowell. Some days the building was so shaken that a pail of water would be nearly emptied, while on other days all was quiet. Experiment proved it was only when the machinery was running at a certain rate that the building was disturbed. The simple remedy was in running it slower or faster so as to put it out of time with the building. We have here the reason of the rule observed by marching armies when they **[R3088 : page 301]** cross a bridge, viz., Stop the music, break step, and open column, lest the measured cadence of a condensed mass of men should urge the bridge to vibrate beyond its sphere of cohesion. Neglect of this has led to fearful accidents. The celebrated engineer, Stephenson, has said that there is not so much danger to a bridge when crowded with men and cattle, as when men

go in marching order. The Broughton bridge near Manchester, gave way beneath the tread of only sixty men. A terrible disaster befell a battalion of French infantry while crossing the suspension bridge at Angiers, in France. Repeated orders were given the troops to break into sections, but in the hurry of the moment and in the rain they disregarded the order, and the bridge fell.' – Professor Lovering, of Cambridge. Tyndall tells us that 'while away up amid the Alpine solitudes of Switzerland a few years ago, I noticed the muleteers tie up the bells of their mules, and was told that the protracted combined tinkling would start an avalanche.'"

– *Harper's Young People.*

The sum and essence of our lesson is expressed in the words of the Apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) Faith is an essential; but we must have crossed the Jordan; we must have been justified; must have partaken of the antitypical passover; must have been sanctified before we could have of the Lord either a promise of victory over our Jericho, or before we could exercise **[R3088 : page 302]** such a faith as would result in that victory. If in the type faith could bring the fall of the strong walls of a city, how great must be the value of faith in the antitype! "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith," but only so long as we trust in the Lord and seek to do those things pleasing to him, can we exercise this overcoming faith.

=====