

## THE WALLS OF JERICHO

Rev. B. David HoIm

After Moses died, Joshua was appointed leader of the Children of Israel. He was a very brave man and a very good general. The Lord gave him courage and intelligence because he obeyed the Word of the Lord. If we want to be really brave and intelligent, we too must learn from the Word and obey it — even as Joshua did.

Joshua was given a very large job by the Lord. He was to bring the Children of Israel into the land of Canaan and make it their land. It could become their land only after they defeated the evil people who were then living in Canaan. This means that they would have to go to war against these people and take the land from them in battle. Of course as long as they loved the Lord and obeyed Him, He would be with them and help them against their enemies.

Many of these enemies lived in large walled cities which were very strong and hard to fight against. One of these cities was named Jericho. It was near to the Jordan river, close to where the Israelites would have to cross to get into Canaan. Joshua knew that this would be the first city they would have to fight against. Because of this he sent out two spies to go to Jericho to find out what they could about the city. After an adventure, which is a story in itself, the two spies returned to Joshua and told him that the people of the land were so afraid of the Israelites that their hearts had melted. For many of them knew of what the Lord had done for the Children of Israel.

Do you remember the miracle performed by the ark of the covenant when the Children of Israel entered Canaan? You probably know that the ark of the covenant was the golden box which held the Ten Commandments. Do you remember how when the feet of the priests, who were carrying the ark, touched the water, the water of the Jordan river was cut off and all the people were able to cross over on dry land? This was a great miracle and one which the wicked people of Jericho probably saw happen, for Jericho was quite close to where the Israelites crossed over Jordan. You can imagine how afraid this miracle must have made the wicked people feel.

The city of Jericho and its people stand for those who twist the truth in order to excuse their evil ways. They try to make their evils seem good and their excuses true. Such people sometimes even fool themselves about this. You know how wrong this is. If we do something wrong, we should admit it. We should never try to make what is wrong seem right. We should never excuse the wrong we do. Let us be honest and brave enough to admit to the wrong we do, to be sorry for it, and to try not to do it again.

But the people of Jericho did not admit to their evils. They hid them behind the big walls of their city — just as evil people hide their evils behind excuses. Such a city could not be allowed to continue in the land of Canaan. It was to be the first city to be destroyed by the army of the Children of Israel - just as false excuses must be the first thing we fight against if we want to overcome the wrong things we do. But in what way are we to fight the false excuses which defend evil? The story of the battle of Jericho tells us how.

The battle of Jericho was one of the strangest battles ever fought. No doubt Joshua wondered how he could capture the city of Jericho when it was surrounded by such a high, strong wall. Also the people of Jericho had completely shut up their city, for fear of the Israelites. It probably seemed almost impossible to capture such a city. But Joshua trusted in the Lord, and in this battle he followed exactly what the Lord told him. He waited for the command of the Lord.

Now the Lord told Joshua to do some strange things for the next seven days. He commanded that once each day for six days they should take the ark of the covenant in which were the Ten Commandments, and march around the walls of the city of Jericho. Seven priests with seven trumpets of rams' horns were to lead the ark — blowing on the trumpets as they went. Armed men were to march in front of the priests, and the rest of the people were to march behind the ark. The people were to be silent. Only the rams horns blown by the priests were to be heard. This went on for six days — once around the city each day. You can imagine how much more frightened the people of Jericho became each day. On the seventh day they were commanded by the Lord to march around the city six times in silence — with only the ram's horn trumpets to be heard. Then they were to march around the seventh time with everyone shouting. The Lord promised that then the walls of Jericho would fall down flat.

Joshua and the people of Israel faithfully carried out the Lord's commands. For six days they marched around Jericho once each day just as the Lord had commanded. On the seventh day they marched around six times and on the seventh time around everyone shouted. Just as the Lord had promised, the walls of the city fell down flat. The armed men rushed into the city and all the wicked people of Jericho were killed. A great victory had been won by the Lord and by Joshua and the people of Israel.

There is only one way to win the battle against the false excuses of evil. We must surround such excuses with truth from the Lord's Word. Just as the Children of Israel marched the ark of the covenant around Jericho, so must we allow the power of the Lord's Word work against our excuses. Only by doing this in as full a way as we can — meant by the seven days of marching — will the excuses we make fall to the ground, just as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. Then when our excuses are gone, we can go on and fight the evil and destroy it.

We learn a number of important things from this story of the walls of Jericho. We learn that evil loves to make excuses behind which it hides. We learn that only by our seeing the Lord's truth — His Word — can these excuses be destroyed and the evil be seen out in the open and fought against. We must see an evil before we can fight against it. Let us beware of the making of excuses when we do something wrong. Let us see the wrong itself and not hide it with excuses. Let us be brave enough to admit and fight against it. If we do we will become like Joshua — brave and fearless in our fight against evil. Amen.