October 4, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **23: Entering the Promised Land**

 AFTER the death of Moses, Joshua was to be the leader of Israel, to conduct them to the Promised Land. He had been prime minister to Moses during the greater part of the time the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness. He had seen the wonderful works of God wrought by Moses, and well understood the disposition of the people. He was one of the twelve spies who were sent out to search the Promised Land, and one of the two who gave a faithful account of its richness and who encouraged the people to go up in the strength of God to possess it. He was well qualified for this important office. The Lord promised Joshua to be with him as He had been with Moses, and to make Canaan fall an easy conquest to him, provided he would be faithful to observe all His commandments. He was anxious as to how he should execute his commission in leading the people to the land of Canaan, but this encouragement removed his fears.

 Joshua commanded the children of Israel to prepare for a three-day journey, and that all the men of war should go out to battle. "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us, we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage."

 The passage of the Israelites over Jordan was to be miraculous. "And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

**Crossing Jordan**

 The priests were to go before the people and bear the ark containing the law of God. And as their feet were dipped in the brim of Jordan, the waters were cut off from above, and the priests passed on, bearing the ark, which was a symbol of the Divine Presence; and the Hebrew host followed. When the priests were halfway over Jordan, they were commanded to stand in the bed of the river until all the host of Israel had passed over. Here the then existing generation of the Israelites were convinced that the waters of Jordan were subject to the same power that their fathers had seen displayed at the Red Sea forty years before. Many of these had passed through the Red Sea when they were children. Now they pass over Jordan, men of war, fully equipped for battle.

 After all the host of Israel had passed over Jordan, Joshua commanded the priests to come up out of the river. As soon as the priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, came up out of the river, and stood on dry land, Jordan rolled on as before and overflowed all his banks. This wonderful miracle performed for the Israelites greatly increased their faith. That this wonderful miracle might never be forgotten, the Lord directed Joshua to command that men of note, one of each tribe, take up stones from the bed of the river, the place where the priests' feet stood while the Hebrew host was passing over, and bear them upon their shoulders, and erect a monument in Gilgal, to keep in remembrance the fact that Israel passed over Jordan on dry land. After the priests had come up from Jordan, God removed His mighty hand, and the waters rushed like a mighty cataract down their own channel.

 When all the kings of the Amorites and the kings of the Canaanites heard that the Lord had stayed the waters of Jordan before the children of Israel, their hearts melted with fear. The Israelites had slain two of the kings of Moab, and their miraculous passage over the swollen and impetuous Jordan filled them with the greatest terror. Joshua then circumcised all the people which had been born in the wilderness. After this ceremony they kept the passover in the plains of Jericho. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you."

 Heathen nations had reproached the Lord and His people because the Hebrews had not possessed the land of Canaan, which they expected to inherit soon after leaving Egypt. Their enemies had triumphed because they had so long wandered in the wilderness, and they proudly lifted themselves up against God, declaring that He was not able to lead them into the land of Canaan. They had now passed over Jordan on dry land, and their enemies could no longer reproach them.

 The manna had continued up to this time, but now as the Israelites were about to possess Canaan and eat of the fruit of the land, they had no more need of it, and it ceased.

**The Captain of the Lord's Host**

 As Joshua withdrew from the armies of Israel, to meditate and pray for God's special presence to attend him, he saw a man of lofty stature, clad in warlike garments, with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua did not recognize him as one of the armies of Israel, and yet he had no appearance of being an enemy. In his zeal he accosted him, and said, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What saith my Lord unto His servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

 This was no common angel. It was the Lord Jesus Christ, He who had conducted the Hebrews through the wilderness, enshrouded in the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. The place was made sacred by His presence; therefore Joshua was commanded to put off his shoes. {SR 178.3}

 The Lord then instructed Joshua what course to pursue in order to take Jericho. All the men of war should be commanded to compass the city once each day for six days, and on the seventh day they should go around Jericho seven times.

**The Taking of Jericho**

 "And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant followed them.

 "And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout. So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp."

 The Hebrew host marched in perfect order. First went a select body of armed men, clad in their warlike dress, not now to exercise their skill in arms, but only to believe and obey the directions given them. Next followed seven priests with trumpets. Then came the ark of God, glittering with gold, a halo of glory hovering over it, borne by priests in their rich and peculiar dress denoting their sacred office. The vast army of Israel followed in perfect order, each tribe under its respective standard. Thus they compassed the city with the ark of God. No sound was heard but the tread of that mighty host, and the solemn voice of the trumpets, echoed by the hills, and resounding through the city of Jericho.

 With wonder and alarm the watchmen of that doomed city mark every move, and report to those in authority. They cannot tell what all this display means. Some ridicule the idea of that city's being taken in this manner, while others are awed, as they behold the splendor of the ark and the solemn and dignified appearance of the priests and the host of Israel following, with Joshua at their head. They remember that the Red Sea, forty years before, parted before them, and that a passage had just been prepared for them through the river Jordan. They are too much terrified to sport. They are strict to keep the gates of the city closely shut, and mighty warriors to guard each gate.

 For six days the armies of Israel performed their circuit around the city. On the seventh day they compassed Jericho seven times. The people were commanded, as usual, to be silent. The voice of the trumpets alone was to be heard. The people were to observe, and when the trumpeters should make a longer blast than usual, then all were to shout with a loud voice, for God had given them the city. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city." "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

 God intended to show the Israelites that the conquest of Canaan was not to be ascribed to them. The Captain of the Lord's host overcame Jericho. He and His angels were engaged in the conquest. Christ commanded the armies of heaven to throw down the walls of Jericho and prepare an entrance for Joshua and the armies of Israel. God, in this wonderful miracle, not only strengthened the faith of His people in His power to subdue their enemies, but rebuked their former unbelief.

 Jericho had defied the armies of Israel and the God of heaven. And as they beheld the host of Israel marching around their city once each day, they were alarmed; but they looked at their strong defenses, their firm and high walls, and felt sure that they could resist any attack. But when their firm walls suddenly tottered and fell with a stunning crash, like peals of loudest thunder, they were paralyzed with terror and could offer no resistance.

**Joshua a Wise, Consecrated Leader**

 No stain rested upon the holy character of Joshua. He was a wise leader. His life was wholly devoted to God. Before he died he assembled the Hebrew host, and, following the example of Moses, he recapitulated their travels in the wilderness and also the merciful dealings of God with them. He then eloquently addressed them. He related to them that the king of Moab warred against them and called Balaam to curse them; but God "would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still." He then said to them, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

 "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed."

 The people renewed their covenant with Joshua. They said unto him, "The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey." Joshua wrote the words of their covenant in the book containing the laws and statutes given to Moses. Joshua was loved and respected by all Israel, and his death was much lamented by them.

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **24: The Ark of God and the Fortunes of Israel**