**The Fall of Jericho**

During his successful presidential campaign of 2016, Donald Trump employed the phrase “Build the Wall!” to rally support for his plan to discourage illegal immigration. Many on the left opposed it and Pope Francis declared that building walls was not Christian. Trump responded by posting a picture of Vatican City with its 39 foot wall built in 846 as a defense against Muslim invaders. For centuries, walls have been used to protect against attack by enemies and they have proven to be very effective. Normally, the offensive weapon of choice against a high wall was a siege to prevent supplies from getting in and forcing the starving inhabitants to surrender. For well provisioned castles or cities, a siege could be a lengthy endeavor such as the Moroccan siege of the Spanish castle of Ceuta which lasted 26 years. Unconventional methods used in attacking walls included catapulting plague infected corpses into a castle, climbing through the human waste disposal shaft to gain entry and sending in a couple of Hobbits armed with only a golden ring. One of the more ingenious plans involved a subterfuge of mammoth proportion. In 1590, the Japanese military commander Hideyoshi secretly built a castle to rival the castle of Odawara which he was planning to attack. When the castle was complete, he had the trees hiding it from view cut during the night so that it appeared the following morning as though risen from the earth which completely demoralized his enemy. In our study of Joshua chapter 6, we see that Joshua did not have to conjure up an elaborate man made plan of attack on Jericho, he just trusted God.

The chapter begins with noting that the walled city of Jericho was shut up so that no one could enter or leave. The inhabitants of the city probably thought they were safe from the Israelites because their wall was impenetrable. God then told Joshua that He had given the city into their hands and gave instructions that armed men were to march around the city once a day for 6 days. They were to be accompanied by priests carrying ram horn trumpets and the ark. On the 7th day, they were to march around the city 7 times after which the trumpets were to sound and the people were to shout (7 days, 7 priests, 7 trumpets). It must have seemed a ludicrous idea but Joshua did not question it and presented it to the people who also accepted it. The plan was carried out according to God’s instruction and on the 7th day before the final marches, Joshua told the people that everything in the city were devoted to God which meant they could not take any plunder or prisoners. All the people in the city were to be killed and articles of value were reserved for God’s treasury. He also told them that Rahab and her family were to be spared (note that their home was part of the wall). After the wall collapsed and they took the city, killing all the inhabitants and removing the gold, silver, iron and bronze, they burned the city. Rahab and her family were brought out of the city and placed in an area outside the camp which was only temporary because verse 25 makes clear that she lived among the Israelites. The chapter ends with Joshua’s warning that anyone who tried to rebuild Jericho would be cursed (see 1st Kings 16:34, see also 2nd Kings 2:18-22 and Luke 18:35-43, 19:1-10).

Some final thoughts:

Just as the ark had led the Israelites into the promised land, it also accompanied them in their conquest of Jericho. As we have discussed before, the ark was God’s earthly throne and it is significant that he ordered it to be carried into the battle which signified His presence. The Israelites later saw the ark as some sort of talisman rather than God’s holy dwelling (see 1st Sam. Chapter 4).

Jericho was the first city to be conquered when the Israelites entered Canaan and so it can be considered the first fruits of their possession of the land. Since the first fruits belong to God, they were prohibited from keeping anything they captured. As we will see in chapter 8, they were allowed plunder from later conquests.

Since the siege of Jericho lasted 7 days, one of those days had to be a Sabbath (Jewish tradition holds that the last day was a Sabbath). Rather than resting, God ordered them to march around Jericho on the Sabbath. Matthew Henry pointed out that God created His laws but is not bound by them. Jesus Himself healed on the Sabbath and declared that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.