



Joshua, A New Leader

In our story today we see a brand-new leader of God's people, Joshua. Joshua was second in charge of the Israelites for many years. He helped Moses lead God's people to the Promised Land. Now Moses was very old, and it was time for him to go see God. Moses was not allowed to see the Promised Land because he disobeyed God. But God was going to show Moses the Promised Land from far away. God told Moses to first tell Joshua and all the Israelites that Joshua was to be the new leader. Next God told Moses to go up high on the mountain nearby, and as he climbed higher and higher, he could see a very beautiful land not too far away. Moses finally stopped to rest and saw what God was to give His people. Moses quietly went to sleep and went to be with God.

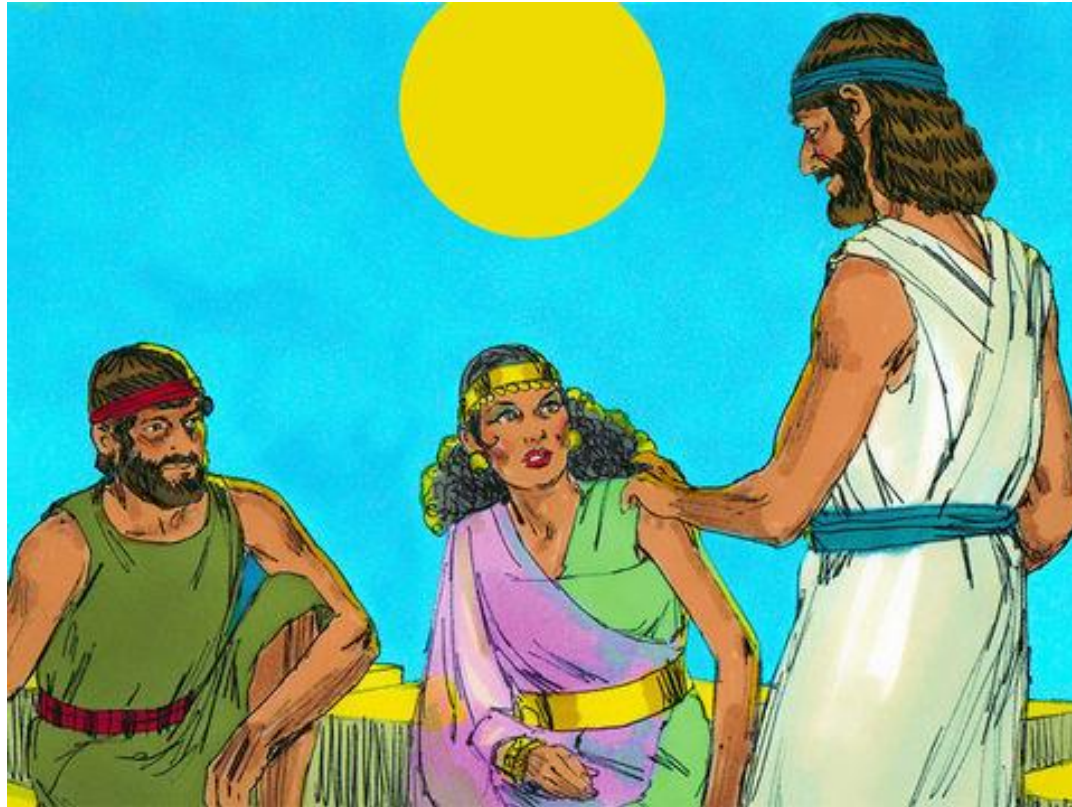


Joshua was down at the bottom of the mountain preparing to lead God's people into the Promised Land. It had been forty years since they first were to go into it. Do you remember why they did not go in forty years ago? Remember that God's people were afraid of the people living in the land. God wanted His people to live in the Promised Land and He was going to make sure that they arrived safely in it.

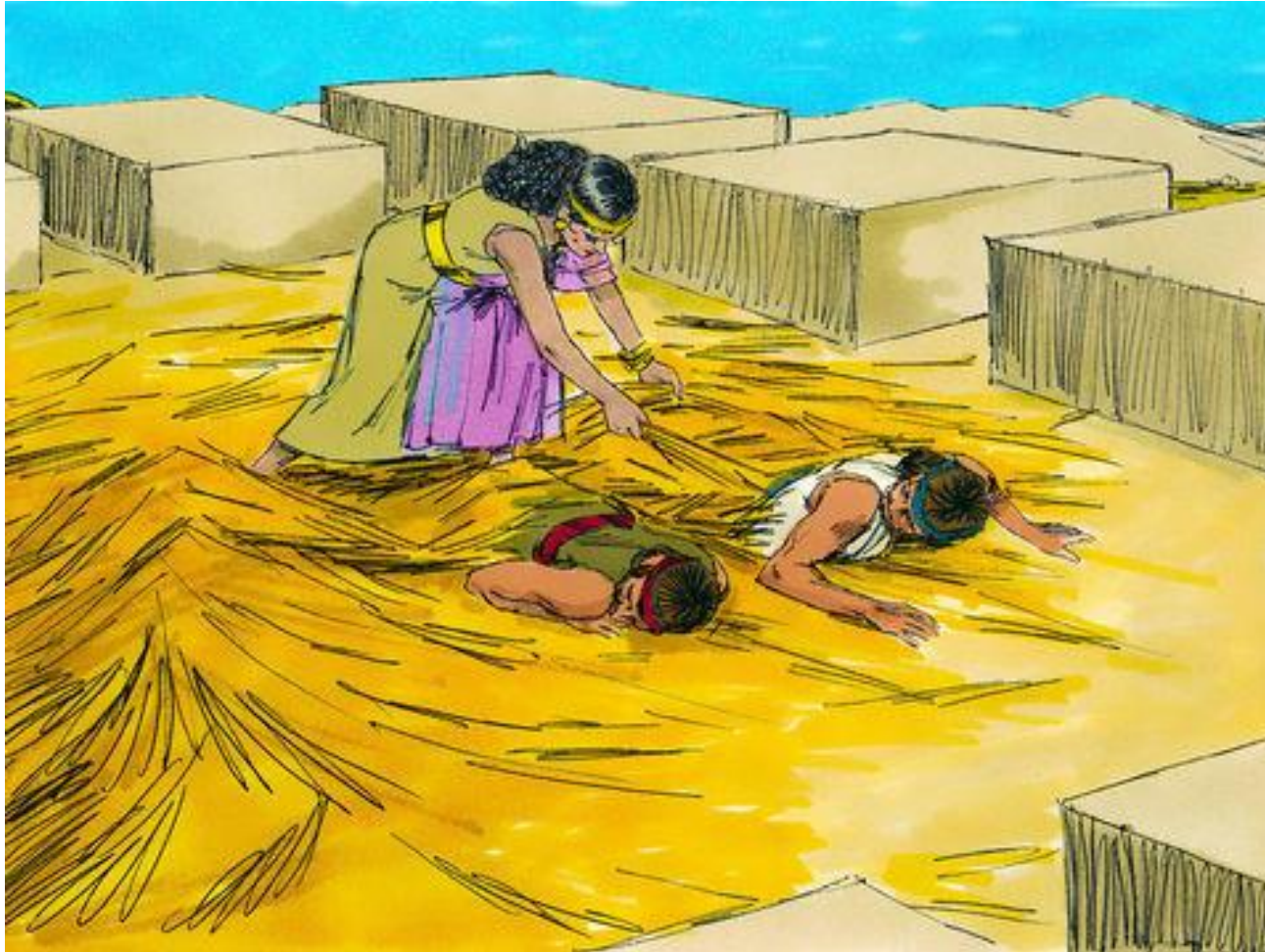
Soon after Moses passed away, God came to Joshua and said, "My servant Moses is gone; now get up and go over the Jordan River to the land I will give to you!" God then told Joshua something very special, "I was with Moses always and I am with you always. I will never leave you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, for I, the Lord your God, is with you wherever you go." Just as God was with Moses, with Joshua, and with the Israelites, God is always with us.



Joshua then sent spies into the Promised Land to find out who was living in the land and if anyone would try to harm them. The spies snuck out at night to see what they could find. One of first things they saw was a very big city called Jericho. They noticed Jericho had very tall walls and very big metal gates. Jericho was a strong city. Jericho's enemies would not be able to get in at all. The spies decided to wait till morning and to see if Jericho would open its gates and then try to sneak in.



When daytime came, the spies snuck in just like they planned. The spies ran into a woman named Rahab. For a while Rahab, and many others who lived in Jericho, had heard stories of the mighty and powerful God of the Israelites. Rahab did not want to fight the Israelites because she knew that God was on their side and they would win any battle. Rahab did not know God for most of her life, but because she had heard about his power and might, she wanted to be on God's side and not her own.



Rahab snuck the two spies into her house. She took them upstairs to a roof that was flat and had them lay down. Rahab covered the spies with stalks of flax which is kind of like hay. Rahab piled it carefully over the spies so they would not be seen.



As careful as the spies and Rahab had been to do all of this secretly, someone saw them. This person quickly told the king of Jericho. The king sent soldiers to Rahab's house. The soldiers beat on the door. "Rahab!" yelled one of the soldiers, and then yelled again, "Bring out the men who came to you! We know they are in your house! They are enemy spies who come to conquer us!" Rahab answered back, "Yes! I did see two men, but I did not know they were spies. It was getting dark and the city gates were about to close, so they ran out of the city before they closed the gates. If you hurry you can catch them!"



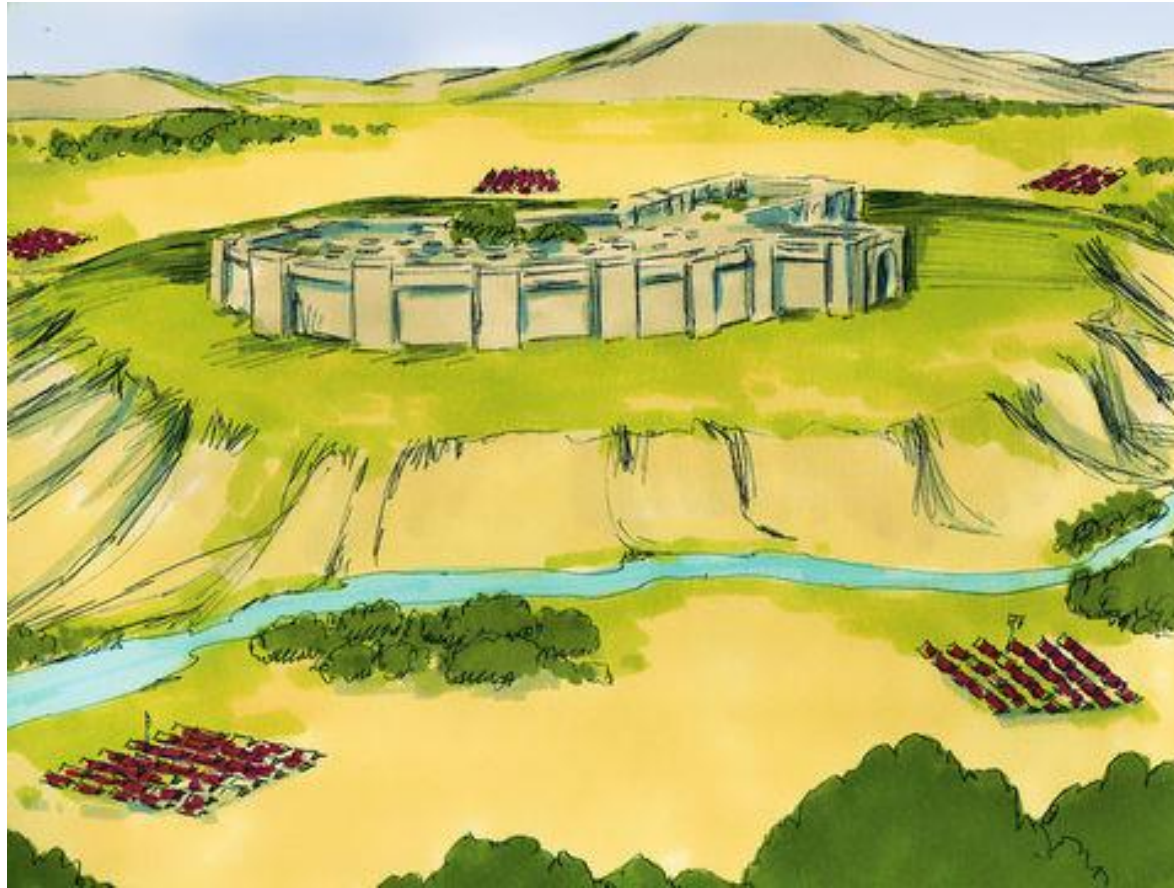
The soldiers ran away hoping to catch the spies. As soon as they had left, the gatekeepers shut the city gates completely so no more spies could get in. Rahab soon went up to the roof. "I know that the Lord has given you this city and this land. Everyone here is afraid of you. We have heard about your God delivering you from Egypt, we heard about the Red Sea and how your God dried it so you could walk on dry land, and what your God has done to help you live," said Rahab. She went on, "When we heard all of these stories about your God and what He was doing to protect you, our hearts were filled with fear. No one has any courage left; we are all terrified of what will happen to us. Your God is the God of both Heaven and Earth. There is no one like Him!" Then Rahab asked something of the two spies, "Promise me when you take over Jericho with your army that you will be kind and protect me and my whole family. I was kind to you; I hid you and protected you. Will you promise me to care for me and my family?" The two spies said, "You have been kind to us, so we promise as long as you tell no one about hiding us here you and your family will be protected."



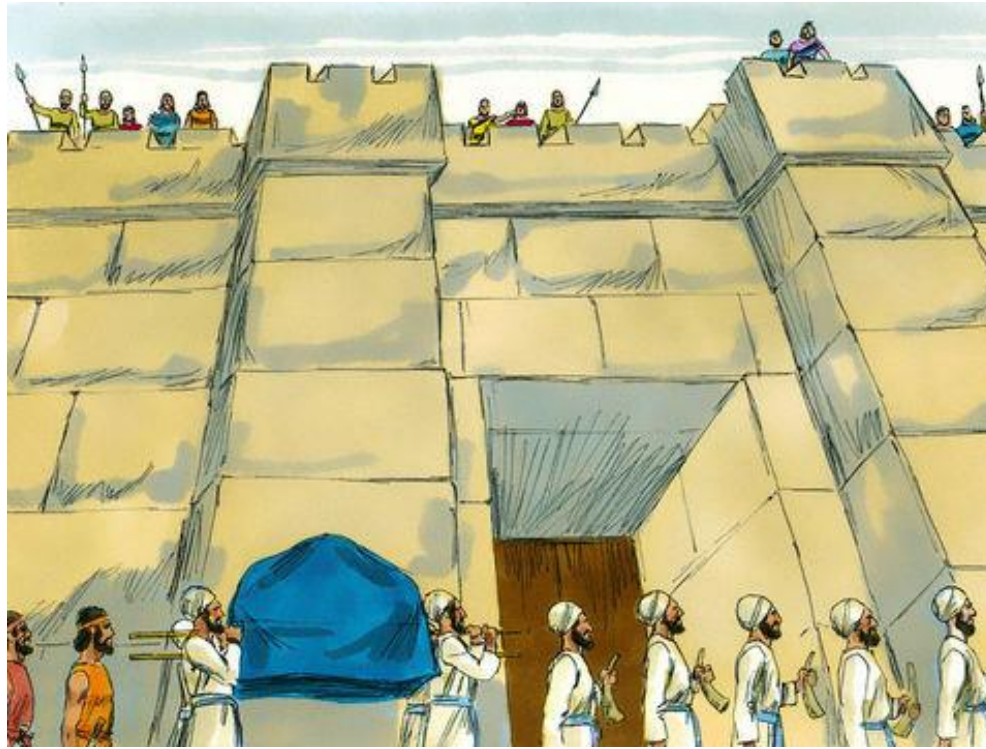
The city of Jericho was a huge city. Its city walls were so thick that houses were built on top of it, and Rahab happened to live in one of those houses. A few of her windows looked out into the country; she could see very far away. Rahab said to the spies, "The city gates are shut. You will not be able to get out of here. But I think I have a plan." Rahab told the spies that she would let them down through one of her windows with a red rope. The spies would then be able to escape into the mountains and make it back to Joshua and the Israelites. Rahab did warn them about one thing, "You both should hide in the mountains for a few days. Those men will stop at nothing to try and find you. They should return back to Jericho in three days. On the third day you will be able to get up and travel safely back to your people." Before the two spies left, one of them told Rahab to do something very important. "When we come back, we will need to know which house you live in. Tie this same red rope outside your window so we can see it. Gather all of your family in this house so they will all be safe. When we come to conquer this city, all those in your house will be safe." The two spies quickly went down the red rope and ran into the mountains. The spies hid in the mountains for three days just as Rahab told them to do. On the third day they got up and made their way to Joshua. Joshua was happy to see the two men, and they quickly told him everything: "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land to us. Everyone is afraid of us because all that God has done!"



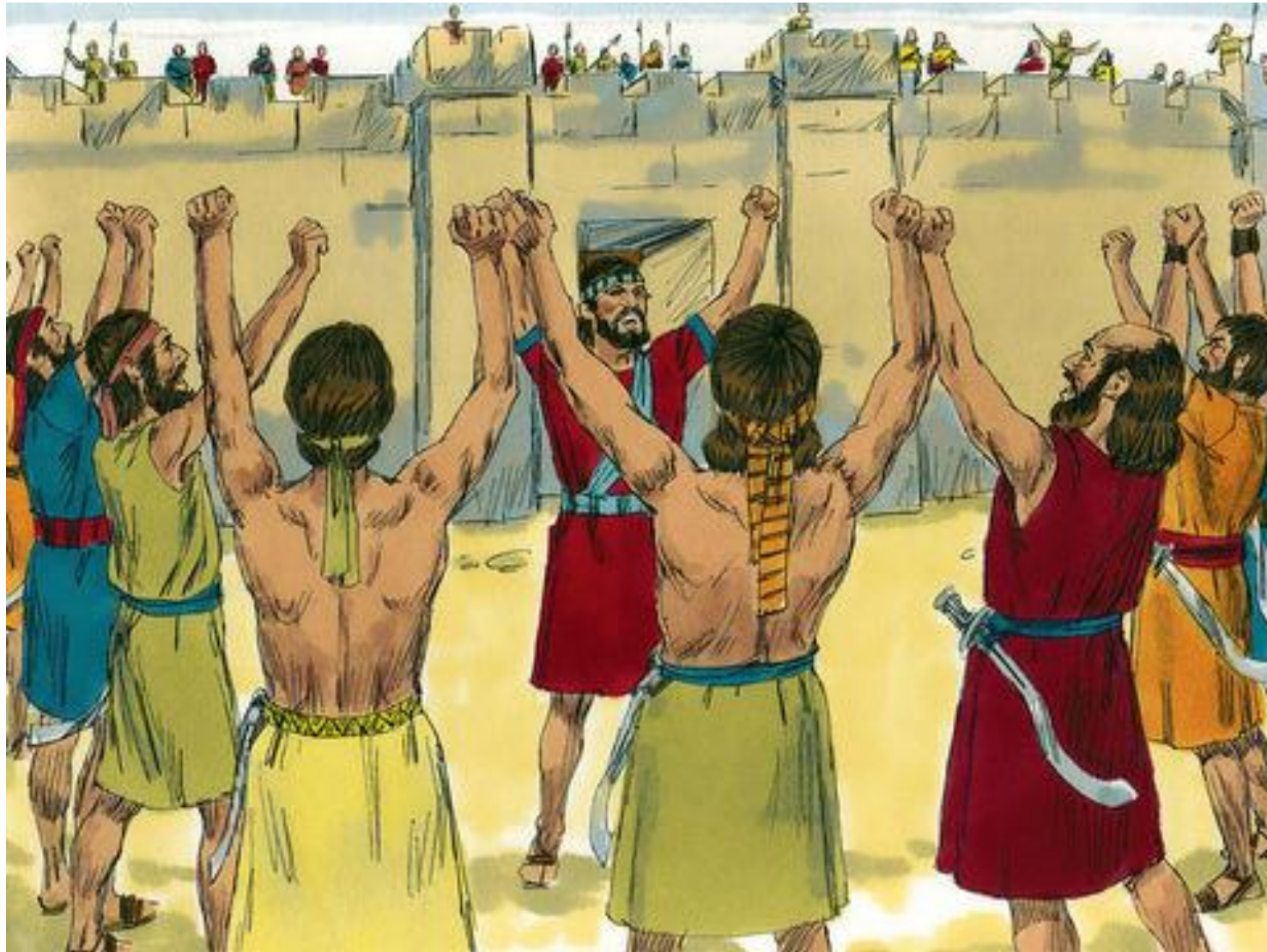
God's people were ready to go and conquer the land. They had gathered their supplies and weapons to go. Joshua commanded everyone to go. The priests led the long march into the Promised Land; they carried the Ark of the Covenant (**remember**: this signified God's presence with His people) with them. After the priests, everyone filed in line and marched behind them. God's people were at the Jordan River ready to cross, but the river was really deep and flowing very fast. But a miracle happened; just as the priests stepped into the water the river stopped flowing! All the water was suddenly gone, and the hot sun dried up the riverbed. God's people walked on dry land. The priests stopped in the middle of the dry riverbed as the Israelites passed by them. As long as the priests stood in the riverbed there was no water to be seen. Once the Israelites finished crossing, the priests left the riverbed and the water came back. The Israelites camped and rested for a few days. Then a strange and unexpected thing happened. After the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, the manna, which they had eaten for forty years, stopped coming. God's people no longer needed it! They had plenty of food to eat in the Promised Land.



The people who were living in the Promised Land were called Canaanites; they became very afraid. They too knew what God could do because they heard what He had done in Egypt. The Canaanites did not worship God, they worshiped a false god called Moloch. The Canaanites were very bad people living in the land God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all of God's people. The Israelites soon set out for Jericho. They knew they must conquer Jericho otherwise they could not have the land God promised them. Once the guards in Jericho saw the Israelites coming, they closed the gates to the city and kept them locked. No one could get in or out of Jericho. Remember the walls were very, very high and very, very thick. Joshua did not know how God's people were going to get in the city, but he knew God had a plan.



God told Joshua to gather all the men to fight, but “leave the women and children at camp. I do not want to see them get hurt.” God told Joshua to have the men form into groups and begin marching. In the middle of the men marching were seven priests with seven trumpets. Following these priests were four more priests carrying the ark of the covenant. Then after the priests were more men. They formed one long line of soldiers and priests. They marched around the city of Jericho. The priests blew their trumpets as they marched, but the soldiers were perfectly quiet. They did not open their mouths to speak. It took a long time to march all around the big city. When they had walked around the city completely, the soldiers went home to their tents for the day. The next day the same thing happened again. All the men of Israel formed their long line and marched around Jericho. After they had marched around Jericho, the Israelites went home without attacking the city. God’s people did this same thing for six days. At first everyone in Jericho was very afraid, but as God’s people kept doing this very weird thing, the people in Jericho became less afraid. The people in the city of Jericho thought, “What are they going to do to us? They keep marching around and that is not going to hurt us!”



But on the seventh day, something different happened. The long line of Israelite soldiers and priests started to march towards Jericho. But instead of marching around the city once, the Israelite army kept marching around the city. God's people marched around Jericho seven times! Not one soldier said a word and only the priests were blowing their trumpets. But on the final march around the city – the seventh march – Joshua cried out to the whole army, "Shout! God has given us the city!" With that the priests blew their trumpets and all the men shouted as loud as they could.



As the trumpets blew and the men shouted, the walls of the city started to shake, pieces of brick and rock started to come loose and crumble to the ground. Bigger pieces started falling, and then bigger pieces than those, and then huge chunks of the wall were coming down! Finally, the whole wall of the city was completely crumbled and gone. There was nothing to protect Jericho from the Israelites. The soldiers ran in and took over the city.



The only people saved that day were Rahab and her family. Rahab had left the Red Rope in her window. God instructed His people to take nothing from Jericho that day. Jericho was an evil place and God did not want his people to have anything from that bad place. Rahab and her family lived with the Israelites after that day. God had kept His promise! The Israelites saw the way in which God was with Joshua as He had been with Moses. News of Jericho's defeat quickly spread throughout the land, many other people became afraid of the God of the Israelites.

Questions for Review

Have the kids answer "Yes" if it is true, or "no" with the correct answer if it is false.

- God wants us to worship and love Him. (Yes)
- God will never leave us either. (Yes)
- God always keeps His promises. (Yes)
- Joshua became the new leader of the Israelites. (Yes)
- Joshua sent a letter to Jericho to see if they could come to the Promised Land. (No! Spies were sent in.)
- The two spies were not able to get into Jericho. (No! They snuck during the daytime.)
- The two spies were helped by a lady named Rahab. (Yes)
- The two spies were caught by soldiers in Jericho. (No! They were able to sneak out.)
- The people of Jericho were afraid of God and the Israelites. (Yes)
- The Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days. (Yes)
- The Israelites whispered and the walls of Jericho fell on the seventh day. (No! They shouted and blew trumpets.)
- Rahab and her family were saved that day. (Yes)
- God always keeps His promises. (Yes)
- God always loves us. (Yes)
- God will never leave us. (Yes)