

Fall of Jericho to Ruth

41.—The Israelites enter the Promised Land. [B.C. *1315]

1. After the death of Moses, the Lord commanded Joshua to pass over the Jordan. The priests took the Ark of the Covenant and marched before; the people followed. When they were come to the banks of the Jordan, and the priests had touched the water with the soles of their feet, the waters above stood still, while the waters below ran down, leaving a dry passage for the people to pass over.

2. When all had passed, the waters returned to their usual course. The people encamped near Jericho, where they celebrated the feast of the Pasch.

Jericho was a large and populous city, well-fortified with walls. For six succeeding days the Israelites went round about it. On the seventh the priests carried with them the Ark of the Covenant, while seven priests sounded the trumpets of Jubilee, and the people shouted with a great cry. All this was done by the command of God. At the sound of the trumpets and the shout of the people, the walls fell flat to the ground, and the Israelites entered and took the city.

3. In time, Joshua conquered all the country, and, by lot, divided it among the twelve tribes of Israel. Each tribe bore the name and was descended from one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Thus, after their long wanderings, had the Israelites arrived in the Land of Promise.

42.—The Judges.

1. Surely the Israelites owed a deep debt of gratitude to the Lord for the rich and magnificent country He had given them; but they were an ungrateful people, and were easily led astray by their pagan neighbors. Shortly after their arrival in the Promised Land they fell into idolatry. In punishment for their crime, the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies. Servitude taught them repentance and their dependence upon God. Having humbled themselves before Him, He sent pious men, called Judges, selected from among the people, to deliver them and to rule them.

2. Their repentance was but of short duration; at the death of each Judge they returned to their sins

and idolatry. For four hundred years this faithless and thankless people were in turn changing from God to the worship of idols—relapsing and repenting. The sixteen Judges sent during this time were: Othouiel, Aod, Samgar, Barac, Debbora, Gideon, Abimelech, Molar, Jair, Jephte, Abesan, Ahialon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel.

3. Amongst these, Samson was one of the most remarkable. So great was his strength that, on one occasion, by the mere power of his hands, he tore a furious lion into pieces. On another, he slew a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass. After this, while asleep, he was made prisoner by the Philistines, and bound with seven cords; but, when he awoke, he broke them like burnt flax.

4. During his life, Samson waged a continual war upon the Philistines: at one time carrying away the gates of their city; at another, burning their crops. At length he was made prisoner and his eyes put out. While the Philistines were feasting and making merry over their victory, Samson was brought out to make sport for them. Wearied, he leaned against the pillars that supported the house in which the Philistines were assembled; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and, his strength returning, he shook the pillars, and the house fell, killing himself and three thousand of his enemies.

The pious and humble Gideon, who fought against the Madianites, was also very renowned.

43.—The Pious Ruth.

1. During the time of the Judges, a certain man of Bethlehem went, with his wife and his two sons, into the land of Moab. His name was Elimelech, and his wife's name Naomi. His sons married women of Moab. In time, Elimelech and his two sons died. Oppressed with grief, Naomi returned to Bethlehem, and her two daughters-in-law resolved to accompany her.

2. When they had come some distance on the way, Naomi strove to persuade her daughters-in-law to return to their own country. Orpha yielded, but Ruth would not; so Ruth came to Bethlehem with Naomi. They returned at the harvest-time, and, being poor, Ruth went into the fields to glean the ears of corn left by the reapers.

3. Led by the hand of God, she went to glean in the fields of Boils, a man of great wealth, and a relation of Elimelech. During the day, Boaz came into the fields to see the reapers. When he saw Ruth and

heard with what courage she had followed Naomi, and with what fidelity she served her, he spoke kindly to her, and told her to remain with his servants and to follow his reapers; besides, when she was thirsty, to go to the vessels and drink. Boaz, moreover, commanded the reapers to let fall, now and then, handfuls of corn, that she might gather them without shame.

4. Some time after this Boaz married Ruth. The Lord blessed them and gave them a son, named Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. From this family Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, descended.

The Moabites were not Jews, but strangers and enemies; hence Our Savior in descending from Ruth, a Moabite, wished to show that He was the Savior not of the Jews alone, but of all mankind.