

## The Plains of Jericho.

JULY 15. JOSHUA 5: 10-15; 6: 1-5.

*Golden Text, Hebrews 11: 30.*

THE Promised Land was not to be occupied without a conflict. The position of the Israelites, to human appearance, had never been so perilous since they left Egypt as now. They were in an enemy's country, liable to attack at any moment from powerful, warlike tribes who would fight desperately for their hearths and homes. They could not retreat unless a second miracle should open a passage for them over Jordan. The interests at stake were of tremendous importance. Everything depended on their courage and fidelity. Should they lose faith in their leader, all were gone. Palestine was at this time inhabited by a number of tribes each with its own king. The sudden appearance of two millions of people, in the plains of Jericho—of whom half a million were fighting men, filled them with dismay. The garrison at Jericho, unable to cope with the invaders, shut themselves up within their fortifications. V. 10. *Gilgal*—was two miles from Jericho. It was the first place pronounced "holy" in the Holy Land, V. 15. Here the tabernacle remained until it was set up at Shiloh, ch. 18: 1. Samuel judged and Saul was made King here, 1 Sam. 7: 16; 11: 14. 15. *Kept the Passover*—for the third time only since its institution, Exo. 12: 2-28, Numbers ch. 9. The new national existence was thus commenced by a solemn act of dedication. Every serious undertaking should be made a special subject of prayer. Time thus spent is not wasted. Vs. 11: 12. The plains being fertile, at this season of the year there would be plenty of ripe grain in the fields. The process of parching or roasting the corn was quickly done, and the food thus prepared was greatly relished. The sudden stoppage of the manna, now that it was no longer needed, proves that its origin was miraculous. V. 13. While Joshua was examining the defences of Jericho, with a view to attacking them, he was suddenly confronted with One in the form of an armed warrior. Nothing daunted, he approached to him and demanded if he were a friend or a foe. There is no neutrality in the war against sin, Matt. 12: 30. V. 14. *Captain of the Lord's host*—This could be none other than the Son of God—the Captain of our Salvation, Heb. 2: 10. V. 2. The same person is here called "the Lord," i. e. Jehovah. *I have given—Canaan* was a splendid gift to Israel, but the salvation which it typified is far greater, and it is freely offered to all who will have it. *Jericho*—not all Canaan yet, but this renowned city as an earnest of further conquests. Thus God still leads his people—one step at a time. Vs. 3-5. *How passing strange* this daily procession must have seemed to the beleaguered garrison. How trying to the faith and patience of a soldier like Joshua. It has a lesson for us. True happiness is to be found in obedience to the revealed will of God, who can accomplish great ends by feeble means. 1 Cor. 1: 27.

## Israel Defeated at Ai.

JULY 22.

JOSHUA VII: 10-26.

*Golden Text, Numbers 32: 23.*

THE utter destruction of Jericho and the massacre of its inhabitants is a signal instance of God's displeasure against idolatry and the other vices which were so prevalent in that voluptuous city. It shewed the Canaanites that Israel had God on their side. In this lesson the justice of God is vindicated in the double punishment with which he visited the trespass of Achan, v. 21. After the fall of Jericho, Joshua attacked Ai, a city of 12,000 inhabitants, situated about ten miles north from Jerusalem. The Israelites were beaten and obliged to retreat, leaving thirty-six of their number dead on the field. The whole nation was humbled and Joshua gave vent to his chagrin in true oriental fashion, vs. 6-9. V. 11. *Israel hath sinned*—the people as a whole, are held responsible for the act until the offender is brought to justice. The particular sin was *covetousness*—the love of money—"the root of all evil," 1 Tim. 6: 10; as hateful in the sight of God as the Canaanitish "idolatry," Col. 3: 5. The sin was aggravated by the explicit warnings of Joshua, ch. 6: 17-19; and was sacrilege, because the things stolen had been consecrated to the Lord. V. 12: *Therefore*—notice the inevitable connection betwixt sin and its punishment, Ezek. 18: 4, 20. V. 13. *Sanctify yourselves*—by legal washings; let them humble themselves before God and prepare for the investigation about to be made. *An accursed thing*—rather, devoted thing, for the city, and all its contents had been solemnly devoted to God by Joshua, ch. 6: 17, and 'tis inappropriate anything so "devoted" was a heinous offence, Lev. 27: 28, 29. V. 14. *Which the Lord taketh*—this was made known by lot, as in the choosing of Saul to be King. 1 Sam. 10: 19-21; Prov. 18: 18. V. 19. *Give glory to God*—a customary form of urging one to speak the truth, John. 9: 24. Vs. 20, 21. Achan could not deny the charge. His confession, the result of fear rather than repentance, illustrates the successive steps that led to his sin,—"*I saw, I coveted, I took.*" There are times when it is well not even to look at things which do not belong to us, let alone to covet them. Vs. 24-26. It is not clear from this passage that Achan's family were slain. The law was explicit on that point, Deut. 24: 16. If they perished, they must have been accomplices in his crime. V. 25. Troublesome persons in the church generally bring trouble upon themselves. Stoning was the ordinary mode of execution for such offences. Nothing less severe would have sufficed to keep up the requisite discipline. How thankful we should be that we live under a milder sway! V. 26. God's anger is not an ebullition of blind passion, but a holy displeasure against unrighteousness of men. When that is removed His anger ceases. He is ever ready to forgive the sinner, Num. 14: 18. But only on the condition that he repents of his sin, Acts. 3: 19.