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Jericho Falls: An Image of the End of the World

Origen
Early Church Father



Origen, one of the greatest Scripture Scholars and preachers of the early Church, was renowned for his Spiritual or symbolic interpretation of Scripture. In the Old Testament people, events and institutions, he saw figures or foreshadowings of future New Testament realities. In this excerpt from a homily on Joshua (Hom. 6. 4: PG 12, 855-856) Origen sees the fall of Jericho as a figure of the End of the world, the trumpets of the Israelites as foreshadowing the last trumpet of the angels. This reading is used in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings for Thursday of the 10th week in ordinary time with the accompanying biblical text taken from Joshua 5:13-6:21.

Once Jericho was surrounded it had to be stormed. How then was Jericho stormed? No sword was drawn against it, not battering ram was aimed at it, no javelins were hurled. The priest merely sounded their trumpets, and the walls of Jericho collapsed.

In the Scriptures Jericho is often represented as an image of the world. There can be not doubt that the man whom the Gospel describes as going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and falling into the hands of brigands is an image of Adam being driven out of paradise into the exile of this world. Likewise the blind men in Jericho, to whom Jesus came to give sight, signified the people in this world who were blinded by ignorance, to whom the son of God came.

Jericho will fall, then; this world will perish. Indeed in the sacred books the end of the world was proclaimed long ago. How will the world be brought to an end, and by what means will it be destroyed? The answer of Scripture is: By the sound of trumpets. If you ask what trumpets, then let Paul reveal the secret. Listen to what he says: The trumpet will sound, and the dead who are in Christ will rise

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incorruptible. The voice of the archangel and the trumpets of God will give the signal, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. Then the Lord Jesus will conquer Jericho with trumpets and destroy it, saving only the harlot and her household.

Jesus our Lord will come says Paul, and he will come with the sound of trumpets. He will save only the woman who received his spies, that is, his apostles, in faith and obedience, and hid them on the roof of her house; and he will join this harlot to the house of Israel. But let us not bring up her past sins again or impute them to her. She was a harlot once, but now she is joined to Christ, chaste virgin to one chaste husband. Listen to what the Apostle say of her: He has determined to present you to Christ as a chaste virgin to her one and only husband. Indeed, Paul himself had been born of her: Misled by our folly and disbelief, he said, we too were once slaves to our passions and to pleasures of every kind.

If you wish to learn more fully about how this harlot ceased to be a harlot then listen to Paul once again: And such were you also, but you have been cleansed and made holy in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. To assure her escape when Jericho was destroyed, the harlot was given that most effective symbol of salvation, the scarlet cord. For it is by the blood of Christ that the entire Church is saved, in the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom belongs glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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In a society preoccupied with romantic love and sisterhood, Christian brotherhood is making a comeback! When Catholic men organize into a "band of brothers," there is support, accountability, and fruitfulness in Christ that is impossible when men live as "islands" unto themselves. The burdens grow lighter and the light grows brighter when men gather together as one. This talk will include stories about what men gathered together have accomplished in the history of

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