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“And The Walls Came Tumbling Down”

Text: Hebrews 11:30; Joshua 6:1ff

In the Bible, some numbers have significance. Those numbers point to a deeper theological insight or present to us a notable pattern.

The number seven is very prominent in scripture. The number seven appears more than 700 times.

* Seven days of creation
* The seven last words of Jesus from the cross

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.
2. Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.
3. Woman, behold, your son! Then He said to the disciple, Behold, your mother!
4. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
5. I thirst
6. It is finished
7. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

* The seven “I Am”s of Jesus

1. I am the bread of life
2. I am the light of the world
3. I am the door
4. I am the good shepherd
5. I am the resurrection and the life
6. I am the way, the truth and the life
7. I am the vine

* The seven petitions found in the Lord’s prayer

1. Hallowed be thy name
2. Thy Kingdom come
3. Thy will be done
4. Give us this day our daily bread
5. Forgive us our trespasses
6. Lead us not into temptation
7. Deliver us from evil

* Psalm 12:6 describes God’s flawless words as being like “gold refined seven times”.

The number seven denotes perfection or completion.

* Seventy times seven is the number of times we are to forgive each other (Matthew 18:21-22).
* A leper named Naaman was commanded to bathe in the Jordan River seven times (2 Kings 5:9-10).
* Jesus performed seven miracles on the Sabbath, which is the seventh day.

1. A man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:9-13)
2. A man possessed by an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-26)
3. Peter’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)
4. A woman crippled by a spirit (Luke 13:10-13)
5. A man with abnormal swelling of the body (Luke 14:1-4)
6. A lame man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-9)
7. A man born blind (John 9:1-7)

* God made a covenant with Noah and his sons, after the flood and sealed it with a rainbow, consisting of seven colors.
* In the last book of the Bible, there are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets sounded by seven angels and seven bowls of wrath, carried by seven angels.

Here in this well-known story, Joshua instructs the people to march around the city of Jericho once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Are you tempted to ask God, “why?”. I am.

I’ve said it several times during our exploration of Hebrews 11, and I’ll say it again:

Faith is the act of casting our full weight and trust upon a credible God. This credible God often commands or requests that His followers do something that, to us, makes no sense. Faith has us saying “yes” to God with no promises of what follows!

Picture these compliant soldiers marching around Jericho once a day for six days. On every one of those days, I am sure some soldier was expecting drama. Nothing. Then, they march around seven times on the seventh day.

First time around the city- nothing!

Second time around the city- nothing!

Third time around the city- nothing!

And so on. How easy it would have been to quit after the fifth or sixth time around. Faith is that frame of mind that inclines itself to do what God says, believing God will keep His word.

There is a hint that God is up to something, in the instructions given.

* Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets (Joshua 6:4). Trumpets were normally only used in warfare and worship. As strange as it sounds, this was a worship event. Blow the trumpets and let Israel worship the God who brings down walls. Let me suggest the highest walls in your and my life will only come down as we worship God. Blow the shofar and praise God.
* Silence was called for (Joshua 6:10). Perhaps Israel needs to be quiet before the Lord, as the Lord is at work. Sometimes we are so eager to shout that we miss what God is up to. I have been in worship services, and so have you, in which the worship leader sounded like a cheerleader and suggested that our worship as more authentic if we would “make some noise in this place”. While worship does often take on a demonstrative, high-volume form, there is a place for silence as well.

As long as we live, we shall have Jericho-like experiences in which we ask God to intervene and dismantle the walls. It will take faith to see it happen.

We trust this same God who worked in Joshua’s behalf.

When John is writing to the seven churches in Asia Minor, the angel of Philadelphia church is told that this word is from the one who is holy and true and who holds the key of David. Revelation 3:8 goes on to describe Jesus as, “He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”.

Let me relate this to Joshua 6. Joshua 6:1describes Jericho as securely shut up. No one went out and no one came in. Yahweh is the one who brings down walls and no one can rebuild them and builds walls and no one can bring them down. Joshua and Israel had physical walls they faced. You have walls of another kind. Obstacles. Mountains. People. I commend you to the God who brings down walls!

Amen