

Israel: Faith to Conquer Jericho (Hebrews 11:30)

Well, we are returning to Hebrews 11 today. We have two more examples to go in our Hebrews hall of faith of people who are listed, of their faith, along with some incident in their lives. We're getting close to the point in the passage—you can see it in verse 32—where the author confesses that he's running out of time. And so he says, “What more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.” So he lists people there without any direct reference to what they did in faith. And then beginning in verse 33, he lists a bunch of things that were done in faith without any connection to anybody in particular. So he lists the people and then he lists the examples of faith, and he's just sort of running through a history of Old Testament persons and incidents there. And what else do you do when you're running out of time other than just dump everything you can on people as fast as you can before you're done? That's why I think this was a message and not necessarily a written work at first. It was probably something that was preached because if he were writing, he wouldn't say, “Time would fail me,” would he? He would just say, “Look, pick up volume 2 and let's go on with the rest of the Old Testament examples.”

But we have two more, Joshua and Rahab. These two are the last two in our list where their name is connected with something that is done in faith. We read of Joshua in verse 30 and of Rahab in verse 31. And if you're quick and astute, you'll say, “But hold on a second. I don't see Joshua's name mentioned in verse 30.” Did you notice that? In fact, did you notice that not only is Joshua's name not mentioned, nobody is mentioned in verse 30. Did you notice that? It says that by faith the walls came down after they had been encircled but doesn't tell us who encircled it. We know who encircled the walls. And it doesn't tell us who was at the head of that. We know that it was Joshua and that he's anything but just incidental in the events that are being referred to here. But it is somewhat out of keeping with the pattern of the author who up to this point has given us a name and then tied that to some example of faith in the life of that person that he has named. So you get to verse 30 and you want to read about Joshua, but Joshua's not mentioned. And so then that makes you wonder, well, whose faith is being described then in verse 30? Who's the key player there or the key players in verse 30? We'll get to that a little bit later on.

Chronologically, you'll notice that the author is keeping with this chronological order that he has had all the way through Hebrews 11 thus far. And we've noticed that there's no divergence from this chronology. You may say, well, the spies came to Rahab and she

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kept the spies before the walls fell down, so that seems a bit out of chronological order, but the author is really describing the overlapping experience and time of two people, Joshua and Rahab here. And yes, she kept the spies or received the spies, but the wall falling down and her preservation through it really is the emphasis of verse 31: “By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” So Rahab is mentioned and what she did. She did not perish, and it was by faith that she did not perish, and she did welcome the spies. So there's a little bit of overlap here between Joshua and Rahab, and we're going to get to Rahab more next week.

So really it is two players here, one event, and that is the destruction of the walls of Jericho and the walls of Jericho falling down. So now we need to go back and take a look at this incident back in the book of Joshua. So turn now back to Joshua 6. Hebrews 11 is providing us the opportunity to jump back into the Old Testament and tackle some big passages of Scripture, some lengthy passages of Scripture. Actually turn back to the book of Joshua, chapter 1. The incident of Jericho is in chapter 6, and we're going to do a flyby of the first five chapters. Time does not permit me to go through everything in the first five chapters of Joshua.

So we get to the beginning of the book of Joshua. The events surrounding Jericho and the falling of the walls of Jericho, them coming crashing down, you may not, if you're not really familiar with your Old Testament chronology—I know there may be a few people who are like this—you may not know exactly where it is that that falls in the series of events as it's unfolded. You may have been familiar with that story because you've heard it told in Sunday school or someone has preached on it, but you may not know exactly where to put that in the history of the nation of Israel and how it relates to Moses.

Well, when we last left off in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 29, pharaoh's army was being immersed in the Red Sea. Remember that? And after they were immersed in the Red Sea—you can go ahead and chuckle. It was a little tie back to last week's message. After they were immersed in the Red Sea, then the children of Israel had been delivered from Pharaoh and his army, and they went wandering in the wilderness, and they end up wandering around there for forty years because of the disobedience of that very same generation that came out of Egypt. When Moses sent the spies up to spy out the land, they came back, twelve of them. And you remember, twelve men went to spy on Canaan and ten were bad and two were good? Remember? What did they see when

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they spied on Canaan? You remember ten were bad and two were good. Am I the only one here that knows that song? Me and my children know that song. Right, ten were bad and two were good. So because of those ten bad spies who came back and gave a bad report to Moses, the nation of Israel came under the curse of God for forty years. And God's judgment upon them was that they would wander around in the wilderness. And that generation who had responded with a lack of faith would not enter into the promised land, but the next generation would enter into the promised land.

So now we pick it up at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, at the beginning of the book of Joshua. And only roughly forty years has passed since Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and out into the wilderness. Now forty years have gone by. All of those who came out in that generation were forty years or younger. They have died off. Joshua was one of the faithful spies who had come back with a good report and said, "Look, it is as dire and as horrible and as daunting as these men say it is, but our God is fighting with us, so we've got this. We can do this if we let our God fight for us." That was a great expression of faith. So we're already familiar with Joshua's faith.

So now, as we enter into the book of Joshua, Joshua has taken over for Moses. And since we spent so much time talking about Moses and his faith, it seems appropriate to look at his death. So if you just turn back one page in your Bible to Deuteronomy 34, follow with me the account of the last days of Moses.

1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan,

2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea,

3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

4 Then the Lord said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."

5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

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6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.

7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.

8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.

9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Deut. 34:1–9 NASB)

So the leadership that was given to Moses is now bestowed upon Joshua in the sight of all the people. We know of Joshua's faith, the nation of Israel knows of Joshua's faith. He's only one of two men, Joshua and Caleb, who were part of that previous generation who had come out of Egypt and now were ready to enter into the land of Canaan. Everybody else had died off. So Joshua is alive, and now the leadership has been given to him. He has been something of a disciple of Moses, as Moses has trained him. It has probably been on the radar for a period of time that Joshua was going to take over for Moses.

Now let's finish off the story of Moses, verse 10:

10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,

11 for all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land,

12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. (Deut. 34:10–12 NASB)

So Moses is renowned. He is singularly unique in the history of Israel, something that we would expect for a man who served as a prophet and in some sense as a priest and in some sense as a king. He had all three of those functions in the nation of Israel, establishing the theocracy, bringing them out of bondage.

And the children of Israel revered him to a degree that is difficult for us probably even to imagine, which is why the Lord buried him in a place Himself where they didn't know

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where Moses was buried. Why did the Lord do that? So that the children of Israel didn't do what is the natural inclination of all men to do, and that is to worship at the grave of somebody who is buried there. Why didn't they carry the bones of Moses into the promised land like they did Joseph's? Remember, they're carrying Joseph's bones with them. Why wouldn't they do that with Moses's bones? Because Moses's bones were not bones yet. Moses's bones were a corpse at this point. You don't carry one of those around in the desert for months while you're conquering cities. And if you do, you certainly don't want to be the guy tasked with carrying that around with you in your caravan. So instead, the Lord buried him off in the land of Moab, and that is where Moses will be resurrected. And you say, "It's really horrible that Moses didn't get to enter into the promised land." He will someday. Just be patient. He will. In a resurrected body, Moses gets to enter into that land with you and I in resurrected bodies and worship the King of kings.

Now notice God's promise to Joshua in Joshua 1. We're just going to continue right into the next book because the story continues that way. And we are going to get to Joshua 6, but there's some essential background information, a bit of a table that we have to set here in Joshua 1, beginning in verse 1.

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,

2 [now take note of what Joshua is promised] "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory." (Josh. 1:1–4 NASB)

Now, here is the promised land before him, just on the other side of the Jordan River. And the Lord is now reiterating the promise that He gave to Abraham and then repeated to Isaac and then repeated again to Jacob. And then He has given this promise to Moses. So now you have this long lineage of godly men who have been promised that the land is still theirs. In spite of the rejection of an entire generation of unfaithful Jews, they still get to inherit the land. God is still going to fulfill His promise. And Joshua now

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understands that their possession of this land rests not on anyone except for God's willingness and ability to fulfill His promise. Four hundred years have passed since that promise was last given to any of Abraham's descendants. And now they are absolutely confident that they will receive exactly what they were promised because God Himself has promised it, and God will fulfill His promise.

Verses 5–6: “No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” Notice the repetition of the fact that God has sworn to do this. They are getting a land, not because they are a strong and mighty people, certainly not because they are morally worthy of receiving these promises, but they are getting a land for one reason and one reason only, and that is that God has promised it to Abraham. And because God has promised it to Abraham, God will always fulfill His promise. So now they're going to come into part of the possession that God has sworn to them.

Notice the phrase in verse 6, “be strong and courageous.” That is repeated. You're going to see it two more times. It's spoken three times in this passage. Verse 7:

7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (Josh. 1:7–8 NASB)

What is the book of the law that he is describing there? It is the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. By this point, that much divine revelation had been given, and probably a couple of psalms. We know that Moses wrote one of the psalms, and if my suspicion is correct, they would have had the book of Job by this point, Job being a very ancient record and the very first book of the Bible written. So that is the book of the law that they have. Specifically, he's talking about the law given to Israel at Mount Sinai that regulated their national life, regulated their religious life, regulated all the ceremonies. And now Joshua is being commanded to obey that. And as long as he obeys that, God has promised that He will do exactly what it is that He is promising to do. He will fulfill it.

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Verse 9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” That is clear revelation to Joshua that he is God's man, that he is the one who is going to bring the nation into this land and give them possession of the land, just as God has promised to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob.

Now, chapter 2, the spies enter into the land ahead of their crossing the Jordan, and Rahab hides them, and she's promised deliverance for her faith. We'll look at that next week. Chapter 3, Israel crosses the Jordan River. God parted the waters for them. This would have happened just north of the Dead Sea. If you remember in your mind a picture of the land of Israel, you have the Dead Sea at the bottom end of the nation of Israel. You have the Jordan River that flows from the north. Up at the top is the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea is at the very bottom end of that. The Dead Sea is the Salt Sea. And they would have been on the east side of the Dead Sea, just above the Dead Sea, ready to cross the Jordan River. That's chapter 3. Jericho was just inside the boundary of that, just on the other side of the Jordan River, a couple of miles from the Jordan River.

In chapter 5, Israel is circumcised because those who were born in the wilderness had not been circumcised. So the entire nation, all the males of the nation, were circumcised there. And it took some time, Joshua 5:8 says, for them to be healed, and then they celebrated the Passover. So that gives you an idea in your mind of what time of the year this was. The Passover celebration would have been March/April of our time of the year. And this would have been, of course, the beginning of the year for them. Do you remember when we looked at the Passover, that the Passover celebration was to begin the calendar year for the nation of Israel?

And also in chapter 5, then the Lord begins to dry up the supply of manna, the supernatural supply of sustenance in the wilderness, because now they're about to enter it. They've crossed the Jordan River, they're in the land, and now they can begin to eat from the fruit of the land.

Chapter 5, verse 13—this is a game changer.

13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?”

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14 He said, “No; rather, I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my Lord to say to his servant?”

15 The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. (Josh. 5:13–15 NASB)

Who is this? Is this an angel? Michael? Gabriel? No, those would be the hosts, right? The Lord's hosts? This is the captain of the Lord's hosts. Who is the captain of the Lord's hosts? I'll give you a hint, He is called Yahweh down in chapter 6, verse 2. This is an Old Testament appearance of God. It is a theophany. And if we are to interpret this in light of our understanding of the Persons of the Trinity and their role within the Godhead, this is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

He shows up before Joshua, dressed as a soldier, we can only assume, with a sword in His hand. And Joshua says, “Whose side are you on?” And the Angel of the Lord says, “I didn't come to take sides. I came to take over. I'm the captain of the Lord's hosts. And now everything that you are going to do, you are going to do at My command.” And then in chapter 6, He begins to give him some of those commands. So this is Yahweh in the second Person, the divine Son, who is now appearing to Joshua to give him instructions on what he is to do at the city of Jericho.

So this is the same One who was the destroyer forty years earlier, who went through the streets of Egypt and killed all the firstborn of Egypt. This is that One. This is the One who appeared in the pillar of fire, in the cloud in the Red Sea, and it says that Yahweh looked down through the pillar of fire and smoke and then smote the Egyptians and drowned them in the Red Sea. This is the same One. This is the One who has promised victory to Joshua. This is Yahweh who is appearing to Joshua.

And you kind of get the sense of that when He says to Joshua, “Take off your sandals because the place on which you stand is holy.” When was the last time that was said? In Exodus 3:

2 The angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. . . .

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5 Then He [that is, the angel of the Lord] said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exod. 3:2, 5 NASB)

So Joshua now gets exactly what's going on. This is Yahweh.

Verse 1 of chapter 6. You say, “Jim, now we finally get to it.” That's right. “Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. The Lord said to Joshua, ‘See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors’” (vv. 1–2). See, in verse 2, this One who is speaking to him, same One back in chapter 5—I know that you're tempted to think, wait a second, that was chapter 5, this is chapter 6. Ignore the chapter division because those are irrelevant. This is Yahweh who is speaking to him in the appearance of the Angel of the Lord. He is going to give to him all of the instructions now to take Jericho.

Jericho, it says, “was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in.” Jericho, of course, would have known that Israel was on its way. They knew of the spies who had come into the land and come into the city and stayed with Rahab. They knew of that. They knew of the children of Israel. Rahab had already confessed to the spies who had come in, “The hearts of all the people are melting because of you.” And when that massive nation came across the Jordan River into that land and camped for a couple of weeks right next to the Jordan River on the western side of it, and they had the circumcision and the celebration of the passover and the healing and they're all mustered there, they would have seen that nation and they would have had every reason to be fearful, and they would have locked the gates and shut the windows and barred the door, Katie, because they're coming. And they were ready, and no one went out and no one came into the entire city.

Jericho was not a large city, but it was a fortified city. It's north of the Dead Sea. It is west of the Jordan River, a couple of miles from the Jordan. It was what was referred to or what we would call a frontier town. It was on the edge of Canaanite civilization, and it would have been a well-fortified city. So it wasn't enormous. It's obviously not enormous because an entire army marches around it seven times in one day. So don't think of it as something the size of this room, but don't think it is something the size of Coeur d'Alene either. It's somewhere in between. It's not a massive city. In fact, the significance of Jericho has nothing to do with its location or with its size. It was the fact that it was well-fortified.

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And so Israel's first city that they have to take is a well-fortified frontier city. Everybody is shut up inside. No one is going in, no one is coming out. And it was obviously the intention of all the inhabitants of Jericho to simply wait out this nation. And eventually these people who cannot scale the walls, who cannot knock over the walls—it's a well-fortified city—eventually they would give up and just go home. Of course, they have no home, right? Guess what? This is their new home. So this is where they're going. They're going to Jericho.

And Israel was ill-equipped for this because they had no machines of war. This is an ex-slave nation who spent forty years wandering around in the desert. So they don't have the typical high-tech weapons of war that would have been part of an army in those days. They couldn't topple the walls. And Jericho's significance is not, again, its size and not, again, its location but the fact that it was well-fortified and the fact that it was the first city. So God is going to do something at Jericho to set the tone for the next several years. He's going to do something to demonstrate that He is the one by His power who would give this to them.

Verse 3:

3 You shall march around the city [here are the instructions again that the Angel of the Lord is giving to Joshua], all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days.

4 Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

5 It shall be that when they make a long blast with the rams' horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead. (Josh. 6:3–5 NASB)

So the Angel of the Lord has given them the arrangement of the army, that the ark is to be out there, the priests are to be out there, they're to blow the trumpets, they're to march for six days, one lap on each of those six days around the city and then go back to camp, and then on the seventh day they were to march seven times. All the time they were to have the seven priests with the seven horns. And you say, what is with all the number sevens? Did you notice it when we were reading through it? That's a lot of

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sevens, isn't it? Is there a significance to the sevens? We'll return to that in just a moment.

Verse 6:

6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant [now Joshua is just giving exactly what the Angel of the Lord has given to him], and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord."

7 Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the Lord."

8 And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them.

9 The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets.

10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!"

11 So he had the ark of the Lord taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. (Josh. 6:6–11 NASB)

So the people now are obeying exactly what Joshua has told them to do and they're silent. They uttered not a word at any point during this.

Verse 12:

12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

13 The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while they continued to blow the trumpets.

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14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days. (Josh. 6:12–14 NASB)

They do exactly what they're instructed to do.

Now we're going to fast-forward to the end of the story in verse 15, but before we do, I want you to imagine the picture of this not from the perspective of the Israelites who are marching around the city, or Joshua, or the commanders, or the priests, or anybody else in Israel. I want you to imagine the perspective of this, what it would look like to have seen this, if you're one of the inhabitants of Jericho. You're held up inside of a well-fortified city. Your expectation is that you can simply wait it out. And Israel finally comes up and they finally start to gather out in front of the city gate. And if you're one of the inhabitants of Jericho, you might be up on top of the well-fortified wall, kind of looking down on them, thinking to yourself, "This is a curious battle formation. They're all kind of lined up in a line right here, and they got some big, shiny, metal, golden thing, a box of some sort out there in the middle of that. And priests—those are not warriors. And rams' horns; we're not sure what benefit that's going to be."

And then as they start marching around the city, you'd be thinking, "OK, now what's going to happen? Are they going—where are they going? They're going—oh, they're just going over to this side of the city." And you follow them all the way around the city the whole time. It's a very curious thing. You've never seen a battle tactic like this before in your life. You're wondering what it is that they're possibly going to hope to accomplish. And they come all the way around full circle, and they get back to the front, and you'd be thinking to yourself, "OK, it was a reconnaissance mission. They want to find out if we left any doors open in the city. Somewhere on the back side, is there a window open, a ladder up there that somebody forgot to take down? Just a reconnaissance. OK, now they're getting ready to attack. Oh, no. They disband and go back to their camp this evening and they're going to wait it out. That was weird."

Wasn't that weird? They've said nothing. They're not shouting back at you. They're not saying, "We're coming to get you. You're coming down." None of that. No taunting, nothing. They're silent. So then you can imagine the king of Jericho would gather together the Joint Chiefs of Staff into the room. You'd have all the Jericho generals there in the room and you start to—let's assess what happened here. Jericho Generals sounds like a basketball team, doesn't it? Like the ones who are always losing to the Harlem Globetrotters. You have all the Jericho generals gathered together around the table and

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you say, “Let's assess what happened here. Are they going to come back? That was a very curious thing. Maybe they're going to leave. Let's wait it out.”

So the next day, early in the morning, it happens again. And you watch them do this the second time, and the third day, the third time. And then all of the Jericho generals get together. After every day, they gather up and they say, “What is going on? Are they just—is this their game plan? They're just going to walk around the city looking for an opening, and they're going to do this until we all starve?” On day five and day six, you begin to think this is really ridiculous. And you might even just leave your weapons at home, go up on the wall with your bucket of popcorn. You're just going to watch these fools walk around this city today just like they did the day previous. It's just entertaining at this point. They might even have hurled accusations and slander upon them, thinking how silly this is. They don't teach this kind of stuff at West Point. These people—this is no military strategy. I mean, they're a puny army to begin with. They're a nation of people, but they're not well-armed. They're nothing against our walls. And so far their battle tactic is simply to walk around the city looking for an open door every day.

But then on the seventh day something else happens. They do it once and they keep going. They think, “Now they've really lost their minds. They're going to do this two times. No, three. No, four, five, six. These crazy people are on their seventh trip around this city.” You've never seen anything like this. You can't imagine anything like this. And in your mind you're thinking, “This is truly the most ridiculous army I have ever seen in my life. These people are out marching around our city with a golden box in their midst, and they've got nothing. And this has been going on for a week.”

Verse 15: “Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times.” That's Joshua's way of saying they didn't do this on any of the previous days. They followed the Lord's command. It is only on the seventh day that they marched around the city seven times.

Verse 16:

16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city.

17 The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

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18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it.

19 But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord.”

20 So that people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.

21 They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. (Josh. 6:16–21 NASB)

That was the victory. There's some obvious lessons to be learned from this. First of all, the event seems custom-designed to demonstrate that God was the one who was giving them the land and that there's no way that anybody in Israel or Joshua or anybody associated with marching could take credit for this. All of the instructions are intentionally given by God for the express purpose of showing that when victory came, it would be God who would give them the victory. All they were to do was to obey. The Angel of the Lord would go before them and God, through an earthquake or just through the collapse of the wall, however it is that God worked that out, at the timing of that shout, those walls came down.

Now of course, there are ridiculous people who say that it really wasn't a miracle, it was the shout of all of those people that caused such a cacophony of sound that it shook and the walls of that city came down simply because of the sound waves. People do this all the time to try and remove from Scripture its supernatural elements. Nothing like that is happening. It is God Himself who has brought these walls down. And this is intended to show them that if they trust Him and they keep His Word and they are obedient to Him, that God will fight for them.

They learned the lesson in a negative way at the very next city because the things that God said, “You shall not take any of these things,” one man amongst them, Achan, took some of them, and so they suffered defeat at the next city. So at Jericho, they learned that obedience is essential because they see victory; at Ai, they learned that obedience is essential because they tasted defeat. So they get both of these back-to-back.

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Second lesson: faith is seen in the obedience of the Israelites. They did not add to or subtract from anything that God said for them to do. They did exactly what He commanded them to do. They followed the instructions to the letter. And there's not a word of grumbling or doubt or complaint amongst all of the Israelites that's recorded in Joshua. And I think this is significant because Scripture never hesitates to tell us when the children of Israel were grumbling and complaining about something. When they grumbled and complained about something or lacked faith, Scripture is honest about it. But this generation of Israelites seems to have learned something that the previous generation did not learn and they suffered for it. They learned that they could be obedient.

Third, notice that their faith and what they did in faith did not seem at all to be the thing that would affect the outcome that happens here. There's no connection between walking around a city one time for six days and then seven times on the seventh day—there's no connection between that military strategy and the walls falling down. Nothing at all. There's no reason that one thing should lead on to the other thing. And so what God had commanded them seems completely contrary to the end that He has in mind for them to accomplish by doing what it is that He called them to do.

And similarly, you and I may not understand why it is that God has called us to do certain things, little expressions of our obedience and our faith. And yet the end that is connected with those little things that we do doesn't necessarily seem like one would lead to the other. You may not understand the significance of small acts of Bible reading and prayer and participation in the ordinances of the Lord and fighting sin and disciplining yourself and giving of your finances and serving one another and fellowshiping with one another. These are small acts of obedience that we do each and every day, sometimes hour by hour. And yet those small acts of obedience accomplish great things in our lives and in the lives of other people. And we might not even be able to connect one to the other necessarily and see the line that takes us from one to the other, but God is always faithful. Having ordained the ends as well as the means, God is always faithful to use the means when we are obedient to accomplish the end that He has ordained to accomplish through us. So the lesson is that you and I are simply to be faithful.

And notice the courage that is on display amongst the nation of Israel. It's a nation of ex-slaves with no military-grade weapons. They're wandering around the desert for forty years. They've never known war. They've never fought a battle. This generation has

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never faced a military enemy before. And now they're standing before a well-fortified city. This would take courage for them to stand there and then once the walls fall down to go in and charge the city to take everything from them.

What they were doing looked utterly ridiculous because faith always looks ridiculous to the world. We've seen that, haven't we, as we've gone through the book of Hebrews and the examples that we've seen here in Hebrews 11? Faith to the world always looks ridiculous. The world looks at your acts of obedience and they don't understand why it is that you do them. They don't understand why you would give of your finances to honor the Lord. They don't understand why it is that you would give up a day of your week to come here and gather with a bunch of hyper-religious people and sing songs and listen to me. They don't understand that. They don't understand why it is that we would give up sin and mortify sin and say no to the lusts of the flesh. In fact, Peter says that worldlings, when they see you turning away from sin, they begin to mock that because they want you to join with them in the dissipation, and they think that your mortifying of sin and living a holy and pure life to honor God—they think that that is ridiculous. They think that your honoring of the Word of God is nothing more than a misguided love and affection for a Bronze Age book filled with fairy tales and fables. That's the view of the world. It's all ridiculous to them, just as the children of Israel marching around the wall would be ridiculous to those in Jericho. But the Lord uses ridiculous things. The Lord uses what is foolish in the eyes of the world to accomplish what is honoring and glorifying to Him.

Now, let's answer these last two questions that we have. First of all, by whose faith? Remember I pointed out at the beginning that nobody's mentioned in Hebrews 11:30. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days." It just says the walls of Jericho fell down. Doesn't say whose faith is active. Why is that? Because I don't think that in this instance it is just Joshua's faith that is in view. In Hebrews 11:30 when it talks of the walls of Jericho, I think it is referring to the fact that it is the entire nation of Israel. Not to say that every single individual in the nation at the time was a God-honoring worshipper of Yahweh. That's not to say that. But it is to say that it was not just Joshua's faith, and it was not just the priests's faith, it was not just the army's faith, that as a whole we could say that this nation was at that moment trusting God to do something through the ordained means to accomplish the end that He had ordained. So it is a collective thing. It is the entire nation that is in view here, a group effort, not the obedience of any one person.

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So now, probably the part you're all wondering about. What about the sevens? There's a lot of sevens there, right? There were seven priests, seven horns, seven days, and seven trips around the city. That's a lot of sevens. And it catches the eye because it is repeated several times throughout the passage. And it catches the eye because it is an instruction from the Lord to do this with seven. Now, if the Lord had just said, "Look, send a bunch of guys. Go out and march. Take some horns with you," and it had turned out that Joshua found only seven guys able to blow horns and only seven horns amongst them, and where do you get horns in the desert, so they had seven, and it just happened to be seven, then we might not notice that. But when God says they are to do this and He lays out the sevens for you, then it kind of catches your eye and you say, "Why seven? Why not six? Why not eight? Why not five?" I think five is a good number. Five is easy to work with in almost every place. You can divide by five, you multiply by five. Five is one of my favorite numbers. Ten is a good number. We're used to thinking in tens. We count in tens, we factor in tens, our money divides up into tens quite naturally. Why seven? Why not twelve? Why not once for every tribe in the nation of Israel? Twelve trips would be good. Why not stretch it out over twelve days? Why seven? And why so many sevens?

Here's what we don't do with the number seven. First, we don't practice numerology. We don't say, OK, there are four sevens in the passage. You have seven rams' horns, you have seven priests, you have seven days, and then you have seven trips around the city. So if you take the seven and you multiply it by four, you get twenty-eight. If you take the eight and the two, you join them to add them together, you come up with ten, which is one number short of the number of disciples minus Judas. So once the Lord had got all the unbelievers out of the crowd of the disciples, which is symbolic of the first generation that died off in the wilderness, then you had nothing but believers left. That's the—where are we at?—that's the eleven, and then ten is one less than that. So when you subtract ten from the eleven, you come up with one. One God, and one God is the one who does all of this work. And that's numerology. Now, I could come up with all kinds of fanciful interpretations. That's not how we interpret Scripture.

A second thing we do not do is take this as an example of how you and I get victory in our lives. I've heard this done from pulpits. What's your Jericho? What are the walls that you need to see come down in your life? Well, what you need to do is you need to pray about that seven times. And then after you prayed about that seven times for seven days, you need to shout the victory and claim the victory for yourself, and the walls in

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your life will come crumbling down. You'll have your own personal victory at Jericho. Amen? Let's pray. That's how—

Third thing you don't do is say, look, if you just give \$777, this is the key—you chuckle, but you know that there are prosperity hacks who do that to Scripture all the time. You give \$777, this is the key to victory in your life, and the walls of your Jericho will come crashing down. You'll walk into your promised land, you'll take possession of all the blessings that God has for you. And if you want to add grace to that, you add \$0.77. So \$777.77 and that's the key to victory in your life. That's not what we do.

What does the seven days remind you of? It's a week. What is our week based off? It's based off creation. Well, what happened on the seventh day of creation? We have six literal twenty-four-hour days where God creates. He does this for six days. On the seventh day, He what? He rested. The seventh day is different than the first six days, is it not? Yeah, for six days, something happened. On the seventh day, God rested, and on the seventh day, it's different than the first six days. If that were all we had in Scripture was just that little connection that I made in my head right there, I don't think we could make anything of that. That would be just as fanciful as the “four times seven gives you twenty-eight. If you add those together, you get ten. Minus that out of eleven, you have one left over.” It would be just as fanciful if I did that. But Scripture connects the promised land to rest, doesn't it? We read that in Hebrews 3–4. Scripture connects the entering into the promised land, the children of Israel doing that, with us entering into God's rest. In fact, that land of promise is called the land of God's rest in Scripture.

Psalm 132:8: “Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength.”

Psalm 132:14: “This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.”

So Scripture calls that land the place of God's rest. And when they entered into that land, it is likened in Scripture to the children of Israel entering into the rest that God had promised for them.

Psalm 95—the passage that I read at the beginning in Hebrews 3–4 quotes from Psalm 95:9–11. “When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into [My land? No.] My rest.” See, entering into the land is likened to rest in Scripture. Hebrews 4:3–5:

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3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”;

5 and again in this passage, “They shall not enter My rest.” (NASB)

So the entering into the promised land is connected to the idea of resting and resting in God and God giving rest to His people. So, as Joshua is bringing the nation of Israel into what Scripture refers to as the land of rest, he does so in such a way as to demonstrate that they would do something for six days. The seventh day would be different. On the seventh day, they would officially, as it were, enter into the land by taking victory of the first city. And they would do this not by their own efforts, not by their own works. They would take possession of this land simply by trusting in God and doing in faith what it is that God had commanded them to do. So I think that that is the connection with the sevens. This whole thing—twice in the passage it says, “and on the seventh day.” That phraseology is intended to connect in our minds a couple of things. They do this and this and it repeats for six days. On the seventh day is something different. On the seventh day, they enter into the place that God's Word said is their rest.

This becomes a picture for you and I. The seventh day is the day of rest, and entering the land was a symbol of that. It was a portrait of that. That is fulfilled for us in an even deeper and more profound way in the Person of Christ because you and I spend our lives laboring in our sin and toiling in our attempts at being righteous, in our attempts at gaining righteousness, we labor away in that for all of this time, and then finally, when by faith we do what God commands us to do, repent and believe, we can enter into His rest. The rest, the fulfillment of the idea of rest, is in the Person of Jesus Christ. Israel entered the rest by trusting and obeying what the Lord said to do. You and I enter God's rest, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, by trusting in Christ and obeying what God says to do—that is, to repent of our sin and believe upon Christ.

When we come to the Lord's Table, we are remembering and recognizing what it is that the Lord has done to provide rest for us. You see, our salvation does not rest upon what we have done. It does not rest upon our merits. We don't earn our salvation. We don't earn God's forgiveness. We don't earn His righteousness. We can't do any of those things. Instead, we are in many ways like the children of Israel. We must just simply

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come empty-handed, unable to conquer any of the law and our own sin and our own flesh and our own iniquity and the justice of God. We have to lay down before all of that and say, “The Lord must do something on our behalf so that I can enter into the rest of salvation.” And God has done that in the Person of Christ.

Our sins were more than we could bear. Our iniquities were more than we could endure the judgment for. All of our sins added up together are more than we could tolerate, more than we could—we would be crushed under the weight of them. As Scripture says, if God were to mark sins, who could stand? Who could stand before the Lord? If God were to count all of your iniquities, if God were to count all of my sins and He were to deal with us according to our sins, we would get what Scripture says—that is, the just judgment of God in fire, in Hell, for all of eternity. That's what our sins warrant.

Who can earn righteousness under the weight of all of that sin? We cannot. Trying to earn righteousness is like the walls of Jericho. You're never going to scale that. You're never going to make yourself acceptable to God. God must do something for us to atone for our sins, to remove our iniquity, and to take away His wrath from us so that He can be generous and gracious and give us eternal life. This was done in the Person of Christ. When Yahweh, revealed in the Old Testament, the second Person of the holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, came into this world, took upon Himself flesh, He lived a perfect life, He never sinned in thought, word, or deed, so that He then, with all of that righteousness, could die in the place of sinners and God could put all of the sin that you and I deserve, pour it out upon Him, and He could bear the punishment and take the wrath for that sin. And then God, by faith, could give us the righteousness that He earned through His perfect life. This is the good news of the gospel. This is salvation. This is what we celebrate when we observe the Lord's Table together, the fact that God has done all of this for us on our behalf.

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