

Joshua 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

Analysis

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

God's battle strategy defies military logic. The command to "compass the city" (vesabbotum et-ha'ir, וְסִבְבֹּתֶם אֶת-הַעִיר) means to circle or march around Jericho's perimeter. The phrase "all ye men of war" (kol-anshei hamilchamah, כָּל-אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה) indicates full military mobilization—not for attacking but for marching in procession. This contradicts conventional siege tactics, which involved assault, starvation, or negotiation—never ritual circumambulation.

The instructions specify precise repetition: "once" daily "six days." This seemingly pointless repetition tests obedience and faith. From a military perspective, marching around a fortified city accomplishes nothing—it exposes troops to defensive fire while demonstrating tactical impotence. Yet God's strategy often appears foolish to worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25-27). Faith means obeying unconventional commands, trusting divine wisdom over human strategy.

Theologically, this illustrates that spiritual victory comes through obedience, not through human strength or clever tactics. The repeated marching builds suspense, tests patience, and demonstrates that God's ways transcend human understanding. The six days of marching without result require perseverance—continuing to obey when results aren't immediately visible. This prefigures New Testament teaching about faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"

(Hebrews 11:1). From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates that faith involves radical trust in God's revealed will, even when His methods seem absurd by worldly standards.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern siege warfare followed established patterns: building siege ramps to scale or breach walls, using battering rams against gates, digging tunnels under fortifications, or starving defenders through prolonged blockade. Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hittite military records detail these conventional tactics. God's command to merely march around Jericho inverted expectations—this was ceremonial procession, not military maneuver.

The seven-day pattern (six days of once-daily marching plus the seventh day's seven circuits) reflects biblical liturgical patterns. Creation took six days followed by Sabbath rest; Israel encamped six days then marched on the seventh; feast observances followed seven-day patterns. The liturgical structure emphasizes this is divine worship expressed through holy war, not mere military campaign. Israel's conquest was theologically conditioned—they executed divine judgment, not human aggression.

Jericho's defenders watching this strange ritual must have been bewildered. Conventional siege tactics they could understand and counter, but ritual marching defied explanation. This psychological warfare undermined morale. The marching testified to confidence in Yahweh's power—Israel needed no conventional tactics because their God would deliver victory. The fall of Jericho's walls would thus be unmistakably supernatural, leaving no room for human boasting (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'Jericho strategies' is God calling you to employ that seem foolish by worldly wisdom but demonstrate faith in His power?
2. How do you respond when God's instructions don't produce immediate results—do you persevere in obedience or revert to conventional methods?
3. What role does patient, persistent obedience play in seeing God's promises fulfilled in your life?
4. How does this passage challenge pragmatism that evaluates methods by apparent effectiveness rather than faithfulness to God's commands?
5. In what ways does Jericho's conquest illustrate that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Corinthians 1:25)?

Interlinear Text

בְּמִלְחָמָה הַ אָנָשִׁים כְּלַיְלָה יְסִבְתָּה מִ				
And ye shall compass	H853	the city	H3605	of war
H5437		H5892		H4421
תַּעֲשֵׂה כִּי יְרַא אֶת הַ עִיר כְּבָבֵב עַמּוֹד				
and go round about	H853	the city	H259	Thus shalt thou do
H5362		H5892	H6471	H6213
שְׁשָׁת יְמִים:				
six	days			
H8337	H3117			

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 4:7 (Parallel theme): But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Numbers 14:9 (Parallel theme): Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

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