

Joshua 6:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

Analysis

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

This verse introduces liturgical elements: seven priests, seven trumpets, seven circuits on the seventh day. The Hebrew shofar (שׁוֹפָר, "trumpets of rams' horns") were ceremonial instruments used in worship, not military signals. The shofar announced Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9), accompanied sacrifice (Leviticus 23:24), and called assemblies (Numbers 10:1-10). Their use here marks this as holy war—worship expressed through conquest.

The ark's presence is central—priests carry seven trumpets "before the ark" (lifnei ha'aron, לִפְנֵי הָאָרוֹן). The ark symbolized God's throne and presence among His people (Exodus 25:22). Its presence in battle demonstrated that Yahweh Himself fought for Israel (Numbers 10:35-36). The conquest was not Israel defeating Canaanites but God executing judgment through His covenant people. The ark's centrality reinforced this theological reality.

The number seven appears repeatedly, symbolizing completion and divine perfection in Hebrew thought. Seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits create liturgical completeness. This numeric emphasis portrays Jericho's fall as divinely orchestrated culmination of God's perfect purposes. Theologically,

this illustrates that spiritual warfare is ultimately worship—acknowledging God's sovereignty, trusting His power, and obeying His commands. From a Reformed perspective, this prefigures the truth that the church's weapons are not carnal but spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:4), rooted in worship and proclamation rather than worldly power.

Historical Context

The shofar was crafted from ram's horn, recalling Isaac's substitutionary ram (Genesis 22:13) and foreshadowing Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. Jewish tradition connects Jericho's trumpets with the binding of Isaac, seeing both as demonstrations of faith and divine provision. The shofar sound is harsh, penetrating, impossible to ignore—appropriately dramatic for announcing divine judgment.

The ark of the covenant contained the tablets of the Law, Aaron's rod, and manna (Hebrews 9:4)—symbols of God's covenant, authority, and provision. Its presence in battle was rare but significant (1 Samuel 4-6 records later disastrous presumption when Israel treated the ark as magical talisman). At Jericho, the ark's presence represented God's legitimate judgment on Canaanite wickedness according to His righteous Law. This was judicial execution, not arbitrary violence.

The seven-day pattern climaxing on the seventh day parallels creation week, with rest and completion on the seventh day. However, Jericho's seventh day brought not rest but conquest—judgment on those who rejected the Creator. The liturgical warfare pattern established here influenced later Israelite practice. When Jehoshaphat faced invasion, he sent worship leaders before the army (2 Chronicles 20:21-22). The principle remained: victory comes through worship and trust in God's presence, not merely military might.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the centrality of the ark (God's presence) in Israel's battle strategy inform Christian spiritual warfare centered on prayer and Scripture?
2. What role should worship and proclamation play in confronting spiritual strongholds in your life or ministry?
3. How does the use of rams' horn trumpets recall Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and point forward to Christ's substitutionary atonement?
4. In what ways do you sometimes separate 'worship' from 'warfare,' failing to recognize that spiritual victory flows from acknowledging God's sovereignty?
5. How does the seven-fold pattern emphasize that God's timing and methods, though different from ours, are perfect and complete?

Interlinear Text

וְשֶׁבַע	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים	יִשָּׂאוּ	וְשֶׁבַע	בְּשׁוֹפָרוֹת:	הַיֹּזְבָּלִים
And seven	and the priests	shall bear	And seven	trumpets	of rams' horns
H7651	H3548	H5375	H7651	H7782	H3104
לִפְנֵי	הָאֵרֶן	וּבַיּוֹם	הַשְּׁבִיעִי	תִּסְבּוּ	אֶת
before	the ark	day	and the seventh	ye shall compass	H853
H6440	H727	H3117	H7637	H5437	H5892
וְשֶׁבַע	פְּעָמֵי יָם	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים	יִתְקַעוּ	בְּשׁוֹפָרוֹת:	
And seven	times	and the priests	shall blow	trumpets	
H7651	H6471	H3548	H8628	H7782	

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 16:1 (Parallel theme): And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Revelation 8:2 (Parallel theme): And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

2 Chronicles 20:17 (Parallel theme): Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

2 Chronicles 20:21 (Parallel theme): And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Revelation 5:1 (Parallel theme): And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

Revelation 15:7 (Parallel theme): And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

Revelation 5:6 (Parallel theme): And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Revelation 1:20 (Parallel theme): The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Revelation 8:6 (Parallel theme): And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Revelation 15:1 (Parallel theme): And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.