

Ezekiel 29:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

Analysis

Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus—This verse is dated to 571 BC, sixteen years after the initial Tyre oracle (26:1). נֶבֶךְ רַאֲצֵר (Nēbūkадре'šar, Nebuchadnezzar) besieged island Tyre for thirteen years (585-573 BC). הָעָבֵד אֶת-חִילוֹ עֲבֵךְ גָּדְלָה (he'ēbîd 'et-hēlô ābōdāh ghēdōlāh, 'caused his army to serve great service')—a massive, exhausting siege.

Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled—From carrying earth and stones to build siege works. רָאשׁ קֶרֶת (rō'sh qērēah, 'bald head') and קֶתֶף מְרֻעֶת (kāthēph mērūṭāh, 'peeled shoulder') depict brutal physical labor. **Yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it**—Island Tyre negotiated surrender, likely paying tribute but preserving much wealth by sea. Babylon's army labored but gained little plunder.

Historical Context

Ancient siege warfare required building ramps, towers, and battering rams—backbreaking labor. Nebuchadnezzar's thirteen-year siege of Tyre (confirmed by ancient records) was the longest in his reign. When Tyre finally surrendered, the

population and much wealth had been evacuated by sea to colonies. Babylon won a pyrrhic victory—technically conquered but economically unrewarding.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does Nebuchadnezzar's unprofitable victory teach about God's sovereignty in using nations?
2. How does the physical toll on Babylon's soldiers humanize those God uses as judgment instruments?
3. Why would God compensate Nebuchadnezzar's efforts despite his pagan motives?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹחִילוֹ אֶת שָׁבֵד בְּלֵב מֶלֶךְ נְבוּכָדְרָאצֵר אֶת מַדְבֵּן
Son of man Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused H853
H1121 H120 H5019 H4428 H894 H5647 H2428

מִקְרָב חַדְשָׁה בְּעֵבֶד הַמְּגֻדָּלָה אֶל מִצְרָיָם כָּל רְאֵשׁ מִקְרָב חַדְשָׁה
for the service a great against Tyrus every head was made bald
H5656 H1419 H6865 H3605 H7218 H7139

לֹא בָּיִת יְהוָה יְכַל כְּתַת וְיְכַל
and every shoulder was peeled yet had he no wages
H3605 H3802 H4803 H7939 H3808 H1961 H0

עַלְיָהּ שָׁבֵד אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶד הַמְּגֻדָּלָה עַל מִצְרָיָם וְלֹחִילוֹ
his army against Tyrus for the service caused H5921 H5656 H834 H5647 H5921
H2428 H6865 H5921 H834 H5647 H5921

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 27:6 (Kingdom): And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

Jeremiah 25:9 (Kingdom): Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.