

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). נְבוּכַדְרֶעֶצַר (Něbûkadre'sar, Nebuchadnezzar) besieged island Tyre for thirteen years (585-573 BC). הָעֶבֶד אֶת־חֵילוֹ עָבַדָה גְדֹלָה (he'ěbîd 'et-ḥêlô ābōdāh ghědōlāh, '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. רֹאשׁ קָרַח (rō'sh qērēah, 'bald head') and כָּתֵף מְרוּטָה (kāthēph mērûṭāh, '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

וְלִחְיָלוֹ	אֶת	עָבַד	בְּכֹל	מֶלֶךְ	נְבוּכַדְרֶעֶצַר	אֶדְם	בֶּן
his army	H853	caused	of Babylon	king	Nebuchadrezzar	of man	Son
H2428		H5647	H894	H4428	H5019	H120	H1121
מִקֵּץ	רֹאשׁ	כָּל	מִצָּר	אֶל	גְּדוֹלָה	הָעֶבֶד	הַ
was made bald	every head		against Tyrus	a great	for the service		
H7139	H7218	H3605	H6865	H413	H5656		
לֹא	הָיָה	לָא	שָׂכָר	מְרוּטָה	כִּתְּףָא	וְכָל	
H3808	H1961		yet had he no wages	was peeled	and every shoulder		
H0			H7939	H4803	H3802	H3605	
עָלֶיהָ:	עָבַד	אֲשֶׁר	הָעֶבֶד	עַל	מִצָּר	וְלִחְיָלוֹ	
H5921	caused	H834	for the service	H5921	against Tyrus	his army	
H5647			H5656		H6865	H2428	

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 Nebuchadnezzar 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.