

Isaiah 14:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers.

Analysis

'The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers.' The staff (symbol of authority and power to strike) and sceptre (symbol of kingship) are both broken—God terminates Babylon's power and rulership. The Hebrew emphasizes totality: broken, finished, ended. This is divine action ('the LORD hath broken'), not merely historical process. God actively intervenes to end tyrannical rule. The 'wicked' and 'rulers' are plural—this applies to Babylonian kings collectively and to all wicked rulers throughout history. Ultimately, Christ's return will break all opposition (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings held literal staffs and sceptres as symbols of authority—seen in artwork, mentioned in inscriptions. Breaking someone's staff or sceptre symbolized complete defeat and end of authority. When Babylon fell to Persia (539 BC), Babylonian kingship ended—no more independent Babylonian rulers. The last king, Nabonidus (and coregent Belshazzar), was defeated; the dynasty terminated. This pattern repeats: God raises up and pulls down kingdoms (Daniel 2:21). Reformed theology sees God's sovereignty over all human authority—He permits, uses, and ultimately removes earthly powers according to His purposes.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What 'staffs' and 'sceptres' in our world—symbols of human authority and power—remain under God's ultimate control?
2. How does knowing God breaks the power of the wicked affect our response to injustice and tyranny?

Interlinear Text

שִׁבְעָה	רַשְׁעֵם	שְׁבָט	מֶשְׁלִיכִים
hath broken	of the wicked	and the sceptre	of the rulers
H7665	H7563	H7626	H4910
The LORD	the staff		
H3068	H4294		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 9:4 (Parallel theme): For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

Psalms 125:3 (Evil): For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.