

Isaiah 21:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

Analysis

'And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.' The survivors ('residue') of Kedar's warriors will be few—'diminished' indicates small remnant remaining. Archers were Arabia's characteristic military strength—mobile, deadly, adapted to desert warfare. Their reduction demonstrates comprehensive military defeat. The concluding formula 'for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it' emphasizes divine authority and certainty—this isn't speculation but revealed decree. The title 'LORD God of Israel' reminds hearers this is Israel's covenant God pronouncing judgment on foreign nation, demonstrating His universal sovereignty. Though not in covenant with Kedar, God governs their fate, holding them accountable to His justice. This establishes that divine authority extends universally, not just to covenant community. All nations answer to God whether or not they acknowledge Him.

Historical Context

Arabian military power was indeed broken by Assyrian campaigns. The mobile archer forces that made desert tribes formidable were systematically defeated by superior Assyrian organization and siege capabilities. While Arabian tribes continued existing, their regional power was permanently reduced. They never again posed the threat they had before Assyrian dominance. This demonstrates that military might divorced from divine blessing ultimately fails. Modern

applications include recognition that all earthly powers exist contingently—God grants and removes power according to His purposes. The certainty formula ('the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it') authenticated the prophecy's divine origin. Its fulfillment validated Isaiah's entire prophetic ministry—if this specific, verifiable prediction proved true, his other prophecies (including Messianic ones) merited trust.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does Kedar's military reduction teach about earthly power's contingent nature?
2. How does the certainty formula ('the LORD hath spoken it') authenticate prophetic authority?
3. Why does fulfillment of specific verifiable prophecies validate a prophet's entire message?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׂרָר	מִסְפָּר	קִשְׁתֵּי	גִבּוֹרֵי	בְנֵי		
And the residue	of the number	of archers	the mighty men	of the children		
H7605	H4557	H7198	H1368	H1121		
קֶדָר	יִמָּעַט	כִּי	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	דִּבֶּר:
of Kedar	shall be diminished	H3588	for the LORD	God	of Israel	hath spoken
H6938	H4591		H3068	H430	H3478	H1696

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:20 (References Lord): But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Zechariah 1:6 (References Lord): But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

Numbers 23:19 (References God): God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

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