

Isaiah 9:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The broken yoke, staff, and rod symbolize liberation from oppression. 'The yoke of his burden' represents slavery and subjugation. 'The staff of his shoulder' and 'rod of his oppressor' indicate instruments of cruel taskmastering. The comparison to 'Midian' recalls Gideon's miraculous deliverance (Judges 7) when God defeated vast armies with 300 men, demonstrating that salvation is the Lord's work alone. This illustrates the Reformed doctrine of *sola gratia*—salvation is entirely God's work, not human achievement. Christ breaks sin's yoke, Satan's rod, and death's staff.

Historical Context

Immediately references deliverance from Assyrian oppression (fulfilled in 701 BC with Sennacherib's army's destruction). Ultimately fulfilled in Christ's victory over sin, Satan, and death. The Midianite comparison emphasizes supernatural deliverance—God alone gets glory. Early Christians understood this as Christ's defeat of spiritual oppressors through His death and resurrection. The 'day of Midian' became code for miraculous divine intervention requiring no human military effort.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What 'yokes' and 'rods' has Christ broken in your personal experience of salvation?
2. How does the Midianite comparison teach us about depending on God's power rather than human strength?
3. In what ways does Christ continue to break oppression and bring freedom today?

Interlinear Text

שָׁבֵט	שְׁכָמָן	וְ	מַט	הַ	מִתְּבָנָה	וְ	מַלְאִיכָּה	וְ	מַלְאִיכָּה
H3588	H853		H853		H4294		H7926		H7626
the yoke	of his burden		and the staff	of his shoulder		the rod			
H5923	H5448		H4294		H7926				
בְּנֵגֶשׂ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּחִתָּה	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	מַלְאִיכָּה	בְּ	מַלְאִיכָּה
of his oppressor		H0	For thou hast broken		as in the day		of Midian		
H5065			H2865		H3117		H4080		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 14:25 (Parallel theme): That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders.

Jeremiah 30:8 (Parallel theme): For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

Nahum 1:13 (Parallel theme): For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

Isaiah 54:14 (Parallel theme): In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

Isaiah 49:26 (Parallel theme): And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Genesis 27:40 (Parallel theme): And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Leviticus 26:13 (Parallel theme): I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.

Isaiah 10:5 (Parallel theme): O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

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

Isaiah 51:13 (Parallel theme): And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?