

Jeremiah 51:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Analysis

Make bright the arrows; gather the shields—the command to polish arrows (Hebrew בָּרוּ, baru, polish, sharpen) and gather shields prepares for battle. **The LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes**—God's sovereignty extends to pagan rulers' motivations. The phrase "raised up the spirit" (הָעִיר אֶת־רוּחַ, he'ir et-ruach) indicates divine stirring of human will without violating agency. Cyrus the Persian led the Medo-Persian coalition; Isaiah 45:1 calls him God's "anointed" (מָשִׁיחַ, mashiach).

For his device is against Babylon, to destroy it—God's purpose (מְזִמָּה, mezimmah, plan, purpose) explicitly targets Babylon's destruction. **Because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple**—the double emphasis on "vengeance" (נִקְמַת יְהוָה, niqmat YHWH) grounds judgment in Babylon's temple desecration (2 Kings 25:9; Daniel 1:2). God avenges His sanctuary's profanation and His people's suffering.

Historical Context

The Medes were historical partners with Persians in the coalition that conquered Babylon. Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) unified Median and Persian territories, creating the empire that conquered Babylon in 539 BC. The reference to "kings"

(plural) may indicate the coalition's multiethnic leadership. The specific mention of temple vengeance recalls Babylon's 586 BC destruction of Solomon's temple and theft of sacred vessels. Cyrus's decree allowing temple rebuilding (Ezra 1:1-4) directly reversed Babylon's temple desecration.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God 'raise up the spirit' of rulers to accomplish His purposes while respecting human agency?
2. What does divine vengeance for temple desecration teach about the seriousness of dishonoring God's worship?
3. How should Christians understand God using pagan rulers (like Cyrus) to accomplish His redemptive purposes?

Interlinear Text

קִבֵּי רוֹ	הַחֲצִיִּים	מִלֵּא ו	הַשָּׁלָטִים	הֵעִיר	יְהוָה	אֶת
Make bright	the arrows	gather	the shields	hath raised up	of the LORD	H853
H1305	H2671	H4390	H7982	H5782	H3068	
רוּחַ	מַלְכֵי י	מִדֵּי י	כִּי	עַל	בְּבֶל	מִזְמַת ו
the spirit	of the kings	of the Medes	H3588	H5921	is against Babylon	for his device
H7307	H4428	H4074			H894	H4209
לְהַשְׁחִיתָּהּ	כִּי	נִקְמָתָהּ	יְהוָה	הָיָא		
to destroy	H3588	it because it is the vengeance	of the LORD	H1931		
H7843		H5360	H3068			
נִקְמָתָהּ	הִיכָלוֹ:					
it because it is the vengeance	of his temple					
H5360	H1964					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 46:4 (Parallel theme): Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.

Jeremiah 50:45 (References Lord): Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them.

Jeremiah 46:9 (Parallel theme): Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow.

Jeremiah 50:9 (Resurrection): For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

