

Jeremiah 51:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider;
and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

Analysis

And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider—God addresses either Cyrus/Medes (His instrument of judgment) or ironically Babylon herself (whom He previously used to judge nations, now broken by being His weapon). The verb "break in pieces" (נָפַץ, *napats*, shatter, scatter) appears 9 times in verses 20-23, emphasizing thorough destruction. Horse and rider represent military might; their shattering indicates total defeat.

And with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider—the repetition with variation (horse/chariot, rider/rider) provides poetic parallelism while emphasizing comprehensive military destruction. Chariots were ancient warfare's most advanced technology—armored vehicles of their day. Yet superior weapons cannot withstand divine judgment. This anticipates Psalm 20:7: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." Military technology proves futile against God's purposes.

Historical Context

Babylon's military included formidable cavalry and chariot forces, which had conquered the known world. Yet when Cyrus attacked, Babylon's military might proved inadequate. The imagery of breaking horses, riders, and chariots in pieces describes not just defeat but utter destruction of military capacity. Subsequent revolts (522 BC, 484 BC) further depleted Babylonian military strength until the once-feared army ceased to exist. Archaeological evidence shows Babylon's

military installations fell into disuse after Persian conquest—literal fulfillment of breaking military power in pieces.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's breaking of military might 'in pieces' demonstrate that no human military power can ultimately resist divine purposes?
2. What does the repetitive emphasis (9 times in vv. 20-23) on breaking in pieces teach about the thoroughness of God's judgments?
3. In what ways do modern societies trust in 'horses and chariots' (military technology), and what should believers trust instead?

Interlinear Text

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| וְנִפְצַתִּי ' | בַּחֵסֶס וְרֹכֵבוֹ: |
| And with thee will I break in pieces | H0 the horse and his rider |
| H5310 | H5483 H7392 |
| וְנִפְצַתִּי ' | בַּחֵבֶרֶט וְרֹכֵבוֹ: |
| And with thee will I break in pieces | H0 the chariot and his rider |
| H5310 | H7393 H7392 |

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 15:1 (Parallel theme): Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Revelation 19:18 (Parallel theme): That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

Zechariah 10:5 (Parallel theme): And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

Zechariah 12:4 (Parallel theme): In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

Nahum 2:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Micah 5:10 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:

Haggai 2:22 (Parallel theme): And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.