

Jeremiah 6:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

Analysis

The invading army is described with terrifying imagery: 'They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy.' Their voice 'roareth like the sea,' suggesting overwhelming force. They come equipped for war, 'riding upon horses, set in array as men for war.' All this is directed 'against thee, O daughter of Zion.' This vivid description emphasizes the horror of the coming judgment. The phrase 'no mercy' is particularly striking given that these ruthless warriors are God's instruments—showing that divine judgment through human agents can be severe. The sea metaphor suggests chaos and uncontrollable power.

Historical Context

Babylonian military power was legendary, employing advanced siege technology, cavalry, and brutal tactics. Historical records confirm their ruthlessness in conquest, including mass deportations and destruction.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do we reconcile God's mercy with His use of merciless instruments for judgment?
2. What does the military imagery teach about the seriousness with which God treats persistent covenant unfaithfulness?
3. How should fear of God's judgment motivate repentance and holy living?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	הָוֶא	אֲכִילָה	וְלֹא	שָׁתַת
on bow	and spear	They shall lay hold	they are cruel	H1931 H3808
H7198	H3591	H2388	H394	
וְלֹא	יְמִימָה	וְלֹא	יְמִימָה	וְלֹא
and have no mercy	their voice	like the sea	roareth	upon horses
H7355	H6963	H3220	H1993	H5483
וְלֹא	לְמִלְחָמָה	וְלֹא	לְמִלְחָמָה	וְלֹא
and they ride	set in array	as men	for war	H5921
H7392	H6186	H376	H4421	
בְּתַת	צִיּוֹן:			
against thee O daughter	of Zion			
H1323	H6726			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:18 (Parallel theme): Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

Jeremiah 50:42 (Grace): They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not shew mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

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