

# Psalm 107:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

## Analysis

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### **For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.**

This verse celebrates God's powerful deliverance of His people from seemingly impossible captivity. The imagery of "gates of brass" and "bars of iron" represents the strongest, most formidable obstacles—literal prison doors or metaphorical barriers to freedom. Ancient Near Eastern fortifications used bronze (brass) and iron for maximum security, making them humanly insurmountable.

The Hebrew verb "broken" (shibar, שִׁבַּר) means shattered or destroyed completely, while "cut in sunder" (gada, גָּדַע) means hewn down or chopped through. These violent, definitive verbs emphasize God's irresistible power to demolish every barrier that enslaves His people. The verse likely references literal deliverance from Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 45:2 prophesies similarly of Cyrus's conquest of Babylon), but the imagery transcends any single historical event.

Theologically, this verse proclaims that no power—political, spiritual, or circumstantial—can permanently confine those whom God purposed to liberate. The New Testament applies this truth to Christ's redemptive work: He "led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8), broke sin's dominion, shattered death's power (Hebrews 2:14-15), and liberated believers from bondage to the law, sin, and spiritual darkness. Christians find here assurance that God's deliverance is comprehensive and certain—He breaks every chain that binds.

## Historical Context

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Psalm 107 is a post-exilic thanksgiving psalm celebrating Israel's return from Babylonian captivity (circa 538 BCE onward). The historical context involves the miraculous fall of Babylon to Cyrus the Persian, who issued a decree allowing Jewish exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem. What seemed politically impossible—the collapse of the mighty Babylonian Empire and the release of captive peoples—God accomplished sovereignly.

The psalm's structure presents four scenarios of distress and deliverance (wilderness wandering, imprisonment, illness, and storm at sea), with this verse appearing in the second scenario about prisoners. Many Jews had literally experienced imprisonment and forced labor in Babylon. The massive bronze gates and iron-barred doors of Babylonian structures were legendary, yet God opened them through Cyrus's conquest.

For post-exilic Israel, this verse became a testimony of God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. Despite seventy years in exile, God had not forgotten His people. The return from Babylon became the paradigm of divine redemption, anticipating the greater exodus Christ would accomplish through His death and resurrection (Luke 9:31). This historical deliverance thus points forward to ultimate spiritual liberation.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. What "gates of brass" and "bars of iron" represent seemingly impossible obstacles in your current circumstances that require God's liberating power?
2. How does confidence in God's ability to shatter every barrier shape the way you pray and approach impossible situations?

3. In what ways does Christ's redemptive work break spiritual strongholds more formidable than any physical prison?
4. How can this verse encourage believers facing political oppression, spiritual bondage, or overwhelming personal circumstances?
5. What does this psalm teach about appropriate responses to God's deliverance —personal testimony, corporate worship, thanksgiving?

## Interlinear Text

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גַּדְעָן בָּרַז לְאַבְרָהָם וְנַח שָׁת דְּלַת וְתָשׁ בָּרָן  
H3588 For he hath broken H7665 the gates H1817 of brass H5178 the bars H1280 of iron H1270 and cut H1438

## Additional Cross-References

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**Micah 2:13** (Parallel theme): The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

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