

Habakkuk 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

Analysis

And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Babylon's contempt for human authority is absolute. **Scoff at the kings** (בָּמְלָכִים יִתְקַלֵּס)—they mock royalty. Earthly monarchs, whom subjects revere, are laughingstocks to Babylon. **Princes shall be a scorn** (רֹצְנִים מִשְׁקָק לוֹ)nobility and aristocracy are mere entertainment, objects of ridicule. This disdain for established authority reflects Babylon's supreme confidence in its own power.

Deride every strong hold (לְכָל-מִבָּצָר יִשְׁקַק)fortifications inspire laughter rather than caution. Judah's carefully constructed defenses, which took years to build and seemed impregnable, were trivial obstacles to Babylonian siege engineering. **Heap dust, and take it** (וַיַּעֲבֹר עָפָר) (וַיַּלְקֹדֶה vayitzebor afar vayilkedah)—they pile up earthen siege ramps and capture cities. This describes Babylonian siege tactics: building massive earthworks against city walls, allowing troops to climb over defenses.

The verse exposes human pretension: kings, princes, and fortifications inspire awe among humans but are powerless before instruments of divine judgment. What humans trust for security—political authority, social hierarchy, military defenses—proves worthless when God decrees judgment. Only trust in God Himself provides genuine security.

Historical Context

Archaeological evidence confirms Babylonian siege methods. At Lachish, excavations uncovered massive siege ramps used by Nebuchadnezzar's forces. These earthworks—literally heaped dust—allowed Babylonian troops to breach walls that defenders thought impregnable. When Babylon conquered city after city throughout Syria-Palestine and Egypt, kings who seemed powerful were captured, humiliated, and exiled. Jehoiachin of Judah was taken to Babylon where he lived as a pensioner dependent on Nebuchadnezzar's mercy. Zedekiah was captured fleeing Jerusalem, forced to watch his sons executed, then blinded and taken to Babylon in chains (2 Kings 25:7). These grim fates fulfilled Habakkuk's prophecy—kings and princes became objects of scorn, their authority revealed as empty before God's ordained instrument of judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What false securities—earthly authority, defenses, status—do modern people trust that prove worthless under divine judgment?
2. How does Babylon's mockery of human power illustrate the ultimate powerlessness of all earthly authority before God?
3. What is the difference between appropriate respect for earthly authority and idolatrous trust in it for ultimate security?

Interlinear Text

ל ו משפט ק ורגן ים יתקלס במלך ים והוא

H1931 **at the kings** **And they shall scoff** **and the princes** **shall be a scorn** H0

H4428

H7046

H7336

H4890

לכל ה לא

מבוא ר

י' ט' י

יִצְבֵּר

H1931

H3605

every strong hold

H4013

H7832

H6651

עלקה: עפּ ר

dust

and take

H6083

H3920

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 36:6 (Kingdom): Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.

Isaiah 14:16 (Kingdom): They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

Jeremiah 32:24 (Parallel theme): Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it.

2 Chronicles 36:10 (Kingdom): And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.