

Isaiah 10:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?

Analysis

The Assyrian recounts his conquests with mocking questions, listing cities that fell before his advance. Calno (Calneh), Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, and Damascus—each represents a defeated kingdom. The rhetorical structure implies inevitability: 'If these great cities fell, why should Jerusalem stand?' Yet the king fails to recognize that Yahweh allowed these conquests as judgment on idolatrous nations. Jerusalem's God is not like the impotent idols of conquered peoples. This prideful comparison sets up the dramatic reversal in verses 12-19.

Historical Context

Each city mentioned had historical significance. Carchemish on the Euphrates fell to Assyria in 717 BC. Hamath and Arpad in Syria were conquered by 720 BC. Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, fell in 722 BC after a three-year siege. Damascus fell in 732 BC. This chronological litany of defeat would have terrified Judah—these were powerful kingdoms, all now subservient to Assyria. Archaeological evidence confirms Assyrian dominance over these territories during Isaiah's ministry.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do past victories sometimes blind us to our true limitations and God's sovereign control?
2. What is the difference between God's people (Jerusalem) and idolatrous nations that makes His protection certain?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	אֵשׁ	כְּכָרְכִּים	כְּלֹנוֹ	אָמֵן	לֹא	אָמֵן	כָּרְפָּד	תַּחַת	כָּהָמָת
H3808	as Carchemish	Is not Calno	H518	H3808	as Arpad	H774	is not Hamath	H2574	
	H3751	H3641							
שְׁמַרְזִים	לֹא	אָמֵן	כְּדָמָם	שְׁאָלָה	לֹא	אָמֵן	שְׁמַרְזִים	לֹא	אָמֵן
H518	H3808	as Damascus	H1834	H8111			is not Samaria		

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 16:9 (Parallel theme): And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

2 Chronicles 35:20 (Parallel theme): After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

Jeremiah 46:2 (Parallel theme): Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

Genesis 10:10 (Parallel theme): And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.