

Isaiah 24:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

Analysis

In the city is left desolation—nish'ar (נִשְׁאַר, "is left/remains") with shammah (שָׁמָּה, "desolation/horror") indicates that devastation is the sole residue. What remains after judgment is not a remnant of people but a residue of ruin. Shammah denotes appalling waste, often used of land under divine curse (Lev 26:31-32, Jer 4:7). The city (ir, עִיר), humanity's proudest achievement, becomes a monument to judgment.

And the gate is smitten with destruction—the sha'ar (שַׁעַר, "gate"), the city's defensive and judicial center where elders met and legal proceedings occurred (Ruth 4:1, Prov 31:23), is yukat (יִכָּת, "beaten/crushed") unto she'iyah (שְׁאִיָּה, "ruin/crashing"). Gates symbolized civic strength and authority—their destruction meant total conquest. Nehemiah's grief over Jerusalem's broken gates (Neh 1:3) reflects this symbolism. Jesus's promise that hell's gates won't prevail against His church (Matt 16:18) reverses this image—His city has imperishable gates (Rev 21:25).

Historical Context

City gates were the most fortified part of ancient defensive systems—multiple chambers, heavy doors, and strategic design made them difficult to breach. Their destruction signified complete military defeat. Judges and elders conducted official business at gates (Deuteronomy 21:19, Amos 5:15), making them symbols of judicial authority and social order. Archaeological excavations at Lachish, Megiddo, and other sites reveal massive gate complexes—some with evidence of

violent destruction (burn layers, arrowheads, collapsed masonry). Isaiah's original audience would have understood gate destruction as comprehensive civic collapse.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the focus on the destroyed gate (the place of justice and authority) reveal about judgment's comprehensive nature?
2. How does the image of 'desolation' being what 'remains' challenge human confidence in lasting civilizations and achievements?
3. In what ways does Jesus's promise about gates not prevailing against His church (Matthew 16:18) offer hope in contrast to this passage?

Interlinear Text

נֶשָׁא ר	בְּעִיר	שָׁמָּה	וְשָׂאִי ה	יָכַת	שַׁעַר:
is left	In the city	desolation	with destruction	is smitten	and the gate
H7604	H5892	H8047	H7591	H3807	H8179

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