

Isaiah 26:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.

Analysis

"For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust." This verse explains why God is trustworthy (note the causal "for")—He brings down every competing power. The repetitive structure hammers home God's sovereign reversal of human pride. **"He bringeth down them that dwell on high"** (ki heshach yoshvei marom)—heshach means to bow down, bring low, humble. Yoshvei marom (dwellers on high) refers both to literal elevated cities built for defense and to proud people exalting themselves.

"The lofty city, he layeth it low" (qiryah nisgabah yashpilennah)—nisgabah means exalted, lofty, inaccessible, set on high. Yashpilennah means to bring low, humble, abase. The threefold repetition that follows—"he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust"—uses Hebrew poetic intensification. Each phrase descends further: high → low → ground → dust, dramatizing total and complete humiliation. What human pride elevates to the heavens, God brings down to dust. This echoes Mary's Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52).

Historical Context

Isaiah witnessed Assyria's systematic destruction of fortified cities throughout the ancient Near East. Cities like Samaria (722 BCE) and Lachish (701 BCE) fell to Assyrian siege engines despite strong fortifications. Yet Isaiah prophesied that Assyria itself—the 'lofty city' of proud human power—would fall. This was fulfilled when God destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers besieging Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:36). Later, Babylon—another 'lofty city'—fell to Persia (539 BCE). The pattern continues through history: every proud empire eventually crumbles. Only God's city stands forever.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'lofty cities' (powers, institutions, ideologies) in our culture seem invincible but are destined for God's humbling?
2. How does this promise of God bringing down the proud shape your response to seemingly overwhelming opposition?
3. Where might pride be building 'lofty cities' in your own heart that need to be brought low?

Interlinear Text

כ	ו	הַשָּׁחַ	וַיֵּשֶׁב	וְ	מִרְׁוֵם	קָרְבָּה	נְשָׁגֶבֶת
H3588	For he bringeth down	H7817	them that dwell	H3427	on high	H4791	city
						H7151	the lofty
						H7682	
הַשְׁפִּילָה	וַיַּשְׁפִּילָה	עַד	אֵצֶן	בָּהּ	עַד	וְגַיְעַת	בָּהּ
he layeth it low	he layeth it low	H5704	even to the ground	H776	he bringeth	H5704	
H8213	H8213			H776		H5060	
עַפְרָה							
it even to the dust							
H6083							

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 18:2 (Parallel theme): And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

Jeremiah 51:37 (Parallel theme): And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

Isaiah 13:11 (Parallel theme): And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Jeremiah 51:64 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.