

Isaiah 40:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

Analysis

The Hebrew 'ayin' (nothing) and 'tohu' (formless void, same word as Genesis 1:2) describe how nations appear from God's perspective. They are 'ephes' (less than nothing)—a striking phrase indicating negative value. This doesn't demean humanity but shows that apart from God, all human achievement is meaningless.

Historical Context

This directly confronted the exiles' despair at being subject to mighty Babylon—from God's viewpoint, Babylon was nothing and could be dismissed in an instant.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing the temporary nature of all earthly kingdoms affect your ultimate loyalties?
2. What things in your life appear significant but are 'less than nothing' from God's eternal perspective?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	הַגּוֹיִם	כְּאֵין	נֶגְדוֹ	מִפָּס	וְתִהְיוּ
H3605	All nations	H369	H5048	to him less than nothing	and vanity
	H1471			H657	H8414
			נֶחְשְׁבוּ	לִי:	
			before him are as nothing and they are counted	H0	
			H2803		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 62:9 (Parallel theme): Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

Isaiah 29:7 (Parallel theme): And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.