

Jeremiah 25:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

Analysis

And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. The phrase kol-malkê haššāpôn (כָּל-מַלְכֵי הַצָּפוֹן, all the kings of the north) encompasses kingdoms from Babylon north through Anatolia. The phrase kol mamləkōt hā'āreṣ 'āsher 'al-pēnê hā'ādāmâ (כָּל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה, all the kingdoms of the world which are upon the face of the earth) represents universal scope—every nation without exception.

The climactic phrase ûmelek Shēshak yišteḥ 'aḥārêhem (וּמֶלֶךְ שִׁשַׁק יִשְׁתֶּה אַחֲרֵיהֶם, and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them) uses an Atbash cipher (Hebrew alphabet reversal) where Sheshach (ששך) = Babel/Babylon (בבל). Babylon administers the cup to all nations but must finally drink it himself. This ironic reversal demonstrates poetic justice—the instrument of judgment faces judgment. The pattern recurs: Assyria judged, then judged; Babylon judged, then judged; Rome executed God's judgment on Jerusalem (AD 70) but itself fell. Only God's kingdom endures forever (Daniel 2:44).

Historical Context

The phrase 'all kingdoms of the world' reflects an ancient Near Eastern perspective where the known world meant the Fertile Crescent and surrounding territories. Yet the principle is truly universal—all human kingdoms are temporary,

all face judgment. The Atbash cipher for Babylon appears also in Jeremiah 51:41, creating coded prophecy during a time when openly predicting Babylon's fall could be dangerous. When Babylon fell to Persia (539 BC), the prophecy was fulfilled—the judge was judged.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the phrase 'all kingdoms of the world' establish God's absolute sovereignty over human history and political power?
2. What does the ironic reversal—Babylon administering judgment but then facing it—teach about the temporary nature of all human empires?
3. How should the certainty that every earthly kingdom will fall shape Christian political engagement and where we place ultimate allegiance?

3