

Jeremiah 50:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited,
but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by
Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

Analysis

Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited—the cause is explicitly divine wrath (qetseph, קֶצֶף), God's intense anger against sin. Unlike natural disasters or military misfortunes, this desolation comes directly from Yahweh's judgment. The permanence is emphasized: 'it shall not be inhabited'—Babylon would never be rebuilt to its former glory.

Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues—travelers will express shock (shamem, שָׁמֵם, astonished/appalled) and scornful contempt (hissing, sharaq, שָׂרַק, a gesture of derision). The great city becomes a cautionary tale, object lesson in divine judgment. Her 'plagues' (makkah, מַכָּה, wounds/blows) are visible evidence of God's retribution. This language anticipates Revelation 18:9-19, where merchants and kings mourn Babylon's fall, astonished that such power could collapse so completely. The reversal is complete: from object of fear to object of pity and mockery.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern travelers would indeed have passed the ruins of Babylon with astonishment. Classical historians like Herodotus (450 BC) described its former glory. By the Christian era, Strabo and others described its desolation. Medieval Arab geographers noted the ruins were avoided as haunted. Modern archaeology confirms the site was never substantially rebuilt—it remains desolate

ruins, a testimony to the accuracy of prophetic Scripture and the reality of divine judgment on proud empires.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does the permanence of Babylon's desolation teach about the finality of God's judgment on systems that oppose Him?
2. How should the visible evidence of historical judgments (like Babylon's ruins) strengthen our confidence in God's promises about future judgment?
3. In what ways do 'Babylon-like' systems today seem invincible, and how does this prophecy challenge that perception?

Interlinear Text

מִקֵּץ צָרָה Because of the wrath H7110	יְהוָה of the LORD H3068	לֹא H3808	תִּשָּׁב it shall not be inhabited H3427	וְהָיְתָה H1961
שְׁמָמָה but it shall be wholly desolate H8077	כָּל־הָ H3605	כָּל־ H3605	עֹבֵר every one that goeth H5674	עַל־ H5921
יִשְׁתְּ shall be astonished H8074	וְיִשְׁרָק and hiss H8319	עַל־ H5921	כָּל־ H3605	מִכּוֹתֶיהָ: at all her plagues H4347

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 18:16 (Parallel theme): To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

Jeremiah 49:17 (Parallel theme): Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.

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