

Jeremiah 50:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

Analysis

How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! Babylon is called the pattish (שִׁפְךָ, hammer), a striking metaphor for the empire that shattered nations and forged empires. God used Babylon as His instrument of judgment (Jeremiah 51:20), but now the hammer itself is gada (גָּדָה, cut down, hewn off) and shabar (שָׁבַר, shattered). The irony is devastating: the breaker is broken.

How is Babylon become a desolation (shammah, שָׁמָמָה)—the same word describing what Babylon inflicted on others (Jeremiah 25:9, 12). Divine justice operates on the principle of measure-for-measure retribution. This anticipates Revelation 18:6-7, where Babylon the Great receives double according to her works. The rhetorical questions express astonishment at Babylon's reversal—the seemingly invincible empire reduced to ruins.

Historical Context

Written around 593 BC when Babylon was at its zenith under Nebuchadnezzar II, this prophecy seemed impossible. Babylon had defeated Assyria (612 BC), Egypt (605 BC), and Judah (586 BC). The city's massive walls, hanging gardens, and wealth made it appear impregnable. Yet in 539 BC, Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon without a battle, diverting the Euphrates and entering through the riverbed gates. The 'hammer' that crushed nations was itself crushed.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of Babylon as His 'hammer' and then its judgment illustrate that earthly powers serve God's purposes but remain accountable?
2. What does the reversal of Babylon teach about the temporary nature of human empires versus God's eternal kingdom?
3. Where do you see modern 'hammers'—powerful institutions or nations—that appear permanent but remain subject to divine judgment?

Interlinear Text

בָּאָזֶן כָּל אָזֶן
H3605 of the whole earth
H349 cut asunder H1438 and broken H7665 How is the hammer H6360

בָּאָזֶן כָּל אָזֶן
H349 H1961 become a desolation H8047 how is Babylon H894 among the nations H1471

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