

Jeremiah 50:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her,
which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell
therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and
beast.

Analysis

For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her—the 'north' (tsaphon, צָפוֹן) is Jeremiah's consistent direction of threat (1:14, 4:6, 6:1). Ironically, Babylon itself invaded from the north; now a northern coalition will destroy Babylon. History reveals this as the Medo-Persian alliance (Daniel 5:28-31). The phrase 'cometh up' ('alah, אָלָה, ascending, advancing) suggests military mobilization on a massive scale.

Which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein—the Hebrew shammah (שָׁמָּה, desolation, waste) indicates utter ruin. 'None shall dwell' (lo-yihyeh yoshev, לֹא־יִהְיֶה יוֹשֵׁב) emphasizes total abandonment. **They shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast**—the verb nadad (נָדַד, to flee, wander, depart) occurs twice for emphasis. Even animals flee, indicating environmental catastrophe or such terror that nothing living remains. This echoes God's judgment on Egypt (Jeremiah 46:19) and Edom (Jeremiah 49:17-18), showing the universality of divine justice.

Historical Context

This prophecy was fulfilled when Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon in 539 BC. The 'nation from the north' was the Medo-Persian coalition (Isaiah 13:17-19, Daniel

5:28). Cyrus approached from the north through the Zagros Mountains. While Babylon wasn't immediately depopulated, its decline began under Persian rule and accelerated under Alexander and the Seleucids. By the first century AD, classical writers described Babylon as largely abandoned ruins. Strabo (Geography 16.1.5) wrote that 'the great city has become a great desert.' Isaiah 13:19-20 and Jeremiah 51:37 prophesied this perpetual desolation, fulfilled as Babylon never regained its ancient glory. The site remained largely uninhabited for two millennia, a testament to the precision of biblical prophecy.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the irony of Babylon (the northern invader) being destroyed by a nation from the north demonstrate God's poetic justice?
2. What does the complete and permanent desolation of Babylon teach about the finality of God's judgments on impenitent nations?
3. How should the historical fulfillment of these detailed prophecies strengthen our confidence in unfulfilled prophecies about Christ's return and final judgment?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	עֲלֶה	עַל יְהִי	גוֹי	מִצָּפֹן וְ	הוּא
H3588	there cometh up	H5921	a nation	For out of the north	H1931
	H5927		H1471	H6828	
	יָשֶׁה יָת	אֶת	אֶרְצָהּ	לְשֹׁמֵם הִיא	וְלֹא
	against her which shall make	H853	her land	desolate	H3808
	H7896		H776	H8047	H1961
	יֹשֵׁב בָּ	בָּהּ	מֵאָדָם	וְעַד	בְּהֵמָה הִיא
	and none shall dwell	H0	both man	H5704	and beast
	H3427		H120	H929	therein they shall remove
					H5110
	הֵלְכוּ:				
	they shall depart				
	H1980				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:11 (Parallel theme): Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Zephaniah 1:3 (Parallel theme): I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 51:62 (Parallel theme): Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.

Jeremiah 50:9 (Parallel theme): For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

