

Jeremiah 50:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country—the emphatic **'I will raise'** (anokhi me'ir, אֲנֹכִי מַעֲרִיר) stresses divine agency. God orchestrates historical events, mobilizing ('causing to come up,' ma'aleh, מַעֲלֶה) an 'assembly' (qahal, קָהָל, congregation, coalition) of nations. The Medo-Persian coalition included Medes, Persians, and various subjugated peoples. This divine raising of nations echoes Habakkuk 1:6, where God 'raised up' the Chaldeans themselves—now they face the same divine sovereignty.

And they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken—'set in array' ('arak, אָרַךְ, arrange in battle formation) indicates organized military siege. 'She shall be taken' (tilaked, תִּלָּכֵד, captured) guarantees success. **Their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man**—literally 'as a warrior who makes childless' (gibbor mashkil, גִּבּוֹר מַשְׁכִּיל). The KJV 'expert' softens the Hebrew's lethal intent. These are arrows that never miss, always kill. **None shall return in vain**—every arrow finds its target, symbolizing the unstoppable efficiency of God's judgment. This contrasts with Babylon's earlier invincibility—now they face warriors whose success is divinely guaranteed.

Historical Context

This prophecy was fulfilled in 539 BC when Cyrus the Great of Persia, leading a coalition of Medes and allied peoples, conquered Babylon. According to both biblical (Daniel 5) and extra-biblical sources (Cyrus Cylinder, Herodotus, Xenophon), the conquest was remarkably swift. Cyrus diverted the Euphrates River and entered through the riverbed gates while Belshazzar feasted (Daniel 5:1-4, 30-31). The 'arrows' may be literal (Persian archers were legendary) or figurative for irresistible military force. What's striking is the contrast: Babylon, which seemed eternal and invincible (Daniel 4:30, Jeremiah 51:53), fell in a single night. The prophecy's fulfillment vindicated Jeremiah's seemingly impossible prediction made decades earlier when Babylon was at its zenith.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's ability to 'raise up' and mobilize nations demonstrate His absolute sovereignty over history?
2. What does the certainty that 'none shall return in vain' teach about the effectiveness of God's ordained judgments?
3. How should the sudden fall of 'eternal' Babylon inform our perspective on seemingly permanent evil powers today?

Interlinear Text

עַל	וּמַעַל הַ	מַעִיר	אֲנֹכִי	הִנֵּה	כִּי
H5921	H5927	H5782	H595	H2009	H3588
	and cause to come up	For lo I will raise			
צָפֹן	מֵאֶרֶץ	גְּדֹלִים	גּוֹיִם	קָהָל	בָּבֶל
H6828	H776	H1419	H1471	H6951	H894
from the north	country	of great	nations	an assembly	against Babylon
מִשָּׁם	לָהּ		וְשֶׁ	יָרְכוּ	
H8033	H0			H6186	
			and they shall set themselves in array		
כְּגִבּוֹר	חֲצִי	תִּלְכֶּד			
H1368	H2671	H3920			
shall be as of a mighty	their arrows	against her from thence she shall be taken			
רִיקָם:	יֵשׁ וְ	לֹא	מִשְׁכָּל	יֵל	
H7387	H7725	H3808	H7919		
in vain	none shall return		expert man		