

Jeremiah 51:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; The prophetic formula "Thus saith the LORD" establishes divine authority—this isn't human prediction but God's decree. The phrase "I will raise up" emphasizes divine agency; God sovereignly orchestrates Babylon's fall through human means (the Medes and Persians, verse 11). The "destroying wind" (ruach mashchit) may be literally translated "destroying spirit," suggesting both natural force and divine judgment.

The description "them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me" uses a cryptic Hebrew phrase Leb Qamai ("heart of my risers/enemies"), likely an Atbash cipher for Kasdim (Chaldeans/Babylonians). Such wordplay demonstrates Scripture's literary sophistication while emphasizing that Babylon's core identity was opposition to God. Their technological, cultural, and military achievements ultimately meant nothing because they positioned themselves against the Almighty.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. God alone determines when powerful nations rise and fall (Daniel 2:21; Acts 17:26)
2. opposition to God brings inevitable destruction, regardless of apparent power

3. God's judgments employ natural and political means while remaining fundamentally supernatural in origin
4. divine sovereignty extends over all nations and peoples.

No empire, however powerful, escapes accountability to God.

Historical Context

Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian in 539 BCE through a combination of military strategy and internal discontent. According to ancient historians (Herodotus, Xenophon) and the Babylonian Chronicle, Cyrus's forces entered Babylon with minimal resistance, possibly diverting the Euphrates River to march through the riverbed under the city walls—fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy that waters would dry up (51:36).

The Cyrus Cylinder (discovered 1879) confirms the bloodless conquest and Cyrus's policy of restoring displaced peoples and their gods—radically different from Babylon's deportation practices. Archaeological evidence shows Babylon continued as a city under Persian rule but never regained imperial power. The prophecy's fulfillment demonstrates God's word's reliability—what He declares against nations comes to pass with historical precision.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Babylon's fall despite enormous power demonstrate the futility of opposing God?
2. In what ways do modern 'Babylons' (powerful systems opposing God) face certain eventual judgment?
3. How should Christians respond to seemingly invincible institutions or ideologies that oppose biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

בְּ לֹא עַל אֶמְרָת הָנָבִיא מֵעִיר בְּקָרְבָּן
H3541 Thus saith the LORD Behold I will raise up against Babylon
H559 H3068 H2005 H5782 H5921 H894

וְאֶל וְשָׁבְּ לֹא בְּקָרְבָּן רַעַם
H413 and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up wind
H3427 H3820 H6965 H7307

מְשִׁיחִיתִךְ

against me a destroying

H7843

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 13:15 (References Lord): Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

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