

Jeremiah 51:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

Analysis

Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon—the military banner (סֵל, nes) signals attack. Ironically, Babylon's own walls become the staging point for siege preparations against her. **Make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes**—the threefold military command (strengthen guard, station sentries, position ambushers) emphasizes thorough preparation. Yet all preparations prove futile against God's decree.

For the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake—the verb pair "devised" (זָמַם, zamam, plan, purpose) and "done" (עָשָׂה, asah, accomplish, perform) emphasizes God's word's efficacy. What God speaks, He accomplishes (Isaiah 55:11). The phrase "against the inhabitants of Babylon" (אֶל־יוֹשְׁבֵי בָבֶל, el-yoshevei Bavel) personalizes judgment—not abstract empire but actual people face consequences for corporate sin. This teaches divine word's reliability: prophecy given 70 years before Babylon's fall was precisely fulfilled.

Historical Context

Babylon's defensive walls were among the ancient world's wonders—double walls with watchtowers, the outer wall wide enough for chariot races. Yet these formidable defenses failed when Cyrus diverted the Euphrates and entered

through the riverbed gates. The irony is profound: despite extensive defensive preparations, the city fell with minimal resistance. Archaeology confirms the walls' massive scale, making their ineffectiveness against God's decree more remarkable. No human defense withstands divine judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the futility of Babylon's defensive preparations illustrate that no human security withstands God's judgment?
2. What does the phrase 'the LORD hath both devised and done' teach about the certainty of God's prophetic word?
3. In what ways do people today rely on 'walls' and 'watchmen' that cannot ultimately protect against divine accountability?

Interlinear Text

אֶל H413	חֹמֹת H2346	בָּבֶל: H894	שָׂאוּ H5375	נִס H5251	הַחֹזֶק יָקוּ H2388
upon the walls	of Babylon	Set up	the standard	strong	
הַמִּשְׁמֶרֶת H4929	הֶקֶד יָמוּ H6965	שְׂמֹרֵי יָם H8104	הִכֵּי יָנוּ H3559	הָאֲרָבִים יָם H693	כִּי H3588
make the watch	set up	the watchmen	prepare	the ambushes	
זָמַם H2161	יְהוָה H3068	גַּם H1571	עָשָׂה H6213	אֶת H853	אֲשֶׁר H834
hath both devised	for the LORD	and done			
דָּבָר H1696	אֶל H413	יֹשְׁבֵי י H3427	בָּבֶל: H894		
that which he spake	against the inhabitants	of Babylon			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:2 (Parallel theme): Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

Jeremiah 51:11 (References Lord): 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.

Jeremiah 51:29 (References Lord): And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

Nahum 2:1 (Parallel theme): He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.