

Jeremiah 51:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

Analysis

And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD—This verse shifts from Babylon as instrument (vv. 20-23) to Babylon as target. The Hebrew shalam (שָׁלַם, "render/repay") carries the sense of full recompense or settling accounts—divine justice operates on a lex talionis (law of retaliation) principle at the national level, though individual salvation operates on grace.

The phrase "in your sight" is striking—God will vindicate His people visibly. Israel's exile involved watching Babylon destroy Jerusalem, burn the temple, and murder their compatriots (2 Kings 25). Now God promises they will witness Babylon's repayment. This connects to Revelation 18:20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," where eschatological Babylon faces judgment for persecuting God's people.

Theologically:

1. divine justice may be delayed but is certain
2. God vindicates His people and His name
3. evil done to God's covenant community is personally registered by God
4. the same measure used against others returns upon the perpetrator (Matthew 7:2).

This isn't petty revenge but cosmic justice maintaining moral order.

Historical Context

Babylon's "evil done in Zion" (586 BCE) included destroying the temple—God's dwelling place—murdering priests and prophets, killing King Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, deporting the population, and desecrating sacred objects by placing them in pagan temples (2 Kings 25:8-21; Daniel 5:2-3).

The promised repayment occurred in stages: Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5) where Babylonian king blasphemed by drinking from Jerusalem's temple vessels, followed immediately by Babylon's fall; Cyrus's decree (539 BCE) allowing Jewish return and temple rebuilding (Ezra 1); and Babylon's gradual decline into insignificance. By the first century CE, Babylon was largely abandoned ruins. The exiles who witnessed Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BCE would not see Babylon's fall (539 BCE), but their children would—fulfilling "in your sight" for the covenant community across generations.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to repay Babylon's evil "in your sight" comfort those suffering injustice?
2. What does this verse teach about God's relationship to His people when they face oppression?
3. How should Christians understand divine vengeance versus personal forgiveness (Romans 12:19-21)?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי י	לְבָבִי ל	וְלֹכֵל לֹ	יֹשְׁבֵי י	כַּשְׂדִּי יִם		
And I will render	unto Babylon	H3605	and to all the inhabitants	of Chaldea		
H7999	H894		H3427	H3778		
תֵּ	כָּל	רָעָתָם	אֲשֶׁר	עָשׂוּ	בְּצִיּוֹן	לְעֵינֶיךָ
H853	H3605	all their evil	H834	that they have done	in Zion	in your sight
		H7451		H6213	H6726	H5869
נֶאֱמַר	יְהוָה:					
saith	the LORD					
H5002	H3068					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 50:15 (References Lord): Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

Revelation 18:24 (Parallel theme): And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.