

Jeremiah 51:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby.

Analysis

Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. This verse intensifies the judgment imagery, contrasting with verse 42's "sea" metaphor. Now Babylon becomes utterly arid—tsiyah (צִיָּה, dry land) and midbar (מִדְבָּר, wilderness/desert), terms denoting uninhabitable wasteland. The Hebrew construction emphasizes totality: **no man dwelleth** (lo-yeshev ish, and **neither doth any son of man pass** (lo-ya'avor ben-adam, —complete depopulation and abandonment.

This fulfills the principle established at creation: God gives fertility and life; His judgment brings barrenness and death (Genesis 3:17-19). The prophecy reverses Babylon's former glory—the city boasted the Hanging Gardens (one of the ancient world's seven wonders), elaborate irrigation systems, and teeming population. Isaiah 13:19-22 prophesied similar desolation, specifically stating Babylon would become like Sodom and Gomorrah. Archaeological evidence confirms Babylon's gradual abandonment; by medieval times it was uninhabited ruins. This warns that human achievement apart from God ultimately comes to nothing (Psalm 127:1).

Historical Context

Ancient Babylon was renowned for agricultural productivity through sophisticated irrigation from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The city's grandeur included

massive walls, the Ishtar Gate, ziggurats, and palaces. Yet after the Medo-Persian conquest (539 BC), Babylon declined. Alexander the Great planned to restore it (323 BC) but died before completing the project. By the Parthian period (141 BC-AD 224), it was largely abandoned. Today, the ruins lie in southern Iraq—a desolate archaeological site exactly as prophesied. The complete fulfillment vindicates God's word through Jeremiah despite 2,500+ years. No major city has been rebuilt there, demonstrating God's sovereign control over nations and history.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does Babylon's transformation from world-renowned city to uninhabited wasteland teach about the temporary nature of human glory?
2. How does this prophecy's literal fulfillment over centuries strengthen confidence in God's other unfulfilled promises?
3. In what ways do modern cities and civilizations similarly risk divine judgment for pride and opposition to God?

Interlinear Text

לֹא אָרֶץ יְשִׁיבָה תְּהִלָּה
H1961 Her cities are a desolation H5892 H8047 H776 H6723 H6160 H776 H3808

בָּהּ | יְשִׁיבָה רְאֵלָא
dwelleth thereby H3605 wherein no man H376 H3808 H5674 H2004

בָּהּ | אֶלְמָם
neither doth any son of man H1121 H120

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:20 (Parallel theme): It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

Jeremiah 2:6 (Parallel theme): Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

Jeremiah 51:29 (Parallel theme): 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.