

Jeremiah 51:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

Analysis

And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. This verse targets Babylon's chief deity, Bel (𒅗𒅗), also called Marduk, whose temple (Esagila) dominated Babylon's religious life. The name Bel means "lord" or "master," claiming sovereignty that belongs only to Yahweh. God promises to "punish" (paqad, פָּקַד) this false god and extract **that which he hath swallowed up**—referring to treasures and sacred vessels plundered from conquered nations, including Jerusalem's temple vessels (Daniel 5:2-3).

The imagery of extracting tribute from Bel's "mouth" ridicules idol worship: false gods who supposedly "eat" offerings and tribute cannot resist the true God who takes back what was stolen. **The nations shall not flow together any more unto him** describes the end of international pilgrimage to Bel's shrine—Babylon's fall meant Marduk's defeat. **The wall of Babylon shall fall** is literally and symbolically significant. Babylon's walls were ancient world wonders—350 feet high, 87 feet thick, with a moat. Yet God declares they will fall, symbolizing the collapse of Babylon's entire religious-political system. This anticipates Revelation 18:2's declaration: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen."

Historical Context

Bel/Marduk was Babylon's patron deity, celebrated annually in the Akitu (New Year) festival. The Enuma Elish creation myth portrayed Marduk defeating chaos and creating order—directly contradicting Genesis. When Cyrus conquered Babylon (539 BC), he claimed Marduk had summoned him to liberate the city, paradoxically fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy through a pagan conqueror. Cyrus's Cylinder inscription shows he restored other temples but treated Bel's shrine pragmatically, effectively ending exclusive Marduk worship. Temple vessels from Jerusalem were indeed recovered (Ezra 1:7-11), literally fulfilling the prophecy of extraction from Bel's "mouth." Babylon's walls were eventually dismantled; Alexander the Great tried rebuilding but failed. The archaeological site today shows wall remnants but nothing of their former glory.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment of Bel demonstrate His sovereignty over all false gods and religious systems?
2. What does the recovery of Jerusalem's temple vessels teach about God's ultimate vindication of His people?
3. How should Revelation's use of 'Babylon' language inform our understanding of spiritual warfare against false worship systems today?

Interlinear Text

וּפְקַדְתִּי י	עַל	בְּ ל	בְּ ל	וְהֵצֵאתִי י	אֶת
And I will punish	H5921	Bel	in Babylon	and I will bring forth	H853
H6485		H1078	H894	H3318	
בְּלֻעוֹ		מִפִּי י	וְלֹא	יִנָּהֲרוּ ו	
that which he hath swallowed up	H1105	out of his mouth	H3808	shall not flow together	H5102
		H6310			
אֶל י	ע וְ	גוֹיִם	גַּם	חֹמֹת	בְּ ל
H413	H5750	and the nations	H1571	any more unto him yea the wall	in Babylon
		H1471		H2346	H894
נִפְּלָה:					
shall fall					
H5307					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:34 (References Babylon): Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

Jeremiah 51:58 (References Babylon): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

Isaiah 2:2 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Jeremiah 50:2 (References Babylon): Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

