

Jeremiah 51:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Analysis

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. The metaphor of Babylon as God's "golden cup" presents profound theological complexity. Despite Babylon's wickedness, God used the empire as an instrument of judgment—the cup from which nations drank God's wrath. The adjective "golden" suggests value and beauty, indicating Babylon's impressive achievements and cultural sophistication, yet the contents remain intoxicating poison.

The phrase "made all the earth drunken" extends Babylon's influence globally. Through conquest, trade, and cultural dominance, Babylon affected all known nations. The statement "the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" suggests ideological and spiritual corruption spreading from Babylon—idolatry, pride, injustice. This anticipates Revelation 18:3, where "Babylon" symbolically represents all worldly systems opposed to God, with nations drunk on her seductive power and luxury.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. God can use even wicked nations to accomplish His purposes while still judging them for their evil

2. powerful nations/cultures exert ideological influence, spreading their values globally
3. worldly success and beauty can mask spiritual poison
4. cultural intoxication blinds nations to truth, producing collective madness.

The Reformed doctrine of providence affirms God's sovereign use of evil for good while maintaining agent responsibility for their wicked choices.

Historical Context

Babylon's cultural influence extended throughout the ancient Near East. The Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BCE) spread Babylonian religion, language (Aramaic became the lingua franca), architecture, and administrative practices across the region. Even after conquest, Babylonian cultural influence persisted—the Jewish exiles themselves adopted Aramaic and Babylonian names (Daniel, Esther).

The metaphor of drinking Babylon's wine reflects the seductive attraction of imperial power and wealth. Small nations sought Babylon's favor, adopted Babylonian customs, and internalized Babylonian values. Archaeological evidence shows Babylonian artistic and architectural styles spreading across subject territories. This cultural hegemony made Babylon's influence more enduring than mere military conquest. The prophecy recognizes that defeating Babylon requires not just military victory but ideological liberation—explaining why God calls His people to "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the image of Babylon's golden cup warn against being seduced by culturally powerful but spiritually poisonous systems?

2. In what ways do contemporary cultures 'make nations drunk' with values and ideologies opposed to God?
3. How can Christians maintain cultural engagement while avoiding intoxication by worldly value systems?

Interlinear Text

כּוֹס	זָה ב	בָּבֶל	בְּיַד	יְהוָה	מְשֻׁכָּה רַת	כָּל
cup	hath been a golden	Babylon	hand	in the LORD'S	drunken	H3605
H3563	H2091	H894	H3027	H3068	H7937	
הָאָרֶץ	מִיַּיְנָהּ	שָׁתוּ	גוֹיִם:	עַל	כִּי	
that made all the earth	of her wine	have drunken	the nations	H5921	H3651	
H776	H3196	H8354	H1471			
וְהָיוּ	גוֹיִם:					
are mad	the nations					
H1984	H1471					

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 14:8 (Creation): And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Revelation 17:4 (Parallel theme): And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Revelation 17:2 (Creation): With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Revelation 18:3 (Parallel theme): For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

Daniel 2:32 (Parallel theme): This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

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