

Zephaniah 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

Analysis

And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her—Nineveh's streets would become pastures. **All the beasts of the nations** likely means 'wild animals of every kind' rather than military nations.

Both the cormorant and the bittern (qa'at ve'qippod)—These are water birds, possibly pelicans and hedgehogs (translations vary). **Shall lodge in the upper lintels of it**—Birds nesting in abandoned palace doorframes depict utter desolation. **Their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds**—Instead of human voices, bird calls. Instead of royal processions, rubble. **For he shall uncover the cedar work**—Nineveh's palaces featured cedar paneling (imported from Lebanon). Exposure to weather meant total ruin. Isaiah 34:11-15 uses similar imagery for Edom's judgment.

Historical Context

Excavations at Nineveh (modern-day Mosul, Iraq) confirm the prophecy's accuracy. The site was buried under dirt mounds for centuries, inhabited only by animals. Ashurbanipal's palace, once glorious with cedar and alabaster, lay in ruins exactly as described—exposed 'cedar work' visible in archaeological remains.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the image of birds nesting in palace ruins teach about the temporary nature of human glory?
2. How does God's specific attention to details like 'cedar work' demonstrate the precision of His prophetic word?
3. Where do you see modern 'Ninevehs'—powerful institutions or systems that seem permanent but face inevitable judgment?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּרְבֹּצוּ shall lie down H7257	בְּתוֹכָהּ in the midst H8432	וּפְּדִירִים And flocks H5739	כָּל H3605	חַיֹּתֶיהָ of her all the beasts H2416	גַּם of the nations H1471
גַּם H1571	וְקָאֵת both the cormorant H6893	גַּם H1571	וְקִפְּדֵי and the bittern H7090	בְּכַפְתֵּי יָדָיָהּ in the upper lintels H3730	וְלִי יִנּוּ shall lodge H3885
וּלְקוֹלָם of it their voice H6963	וְיִשׁוּרֵיהֶם shall sing H7891	בַּחֲלוֹנוֹת in the windows H2474	חֲרָב desolation H2721	וּבִשְׁעֵיהֶם shall be in the thresholds H5592	
כִּי H3588	אֲרָזָהּ the cedar work H731	עֲקֹהָ: for he shall uncover H6168			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 22:14 (Parallel theme): That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.

Amos 9:1 (Parallel theme): I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

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