

Amos 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

Analysis

Continuing the oracle against Damascus: "But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad." Fire represents divine judgment throughout Scripture (Genesis 19:24, Leviticus 10:1-2, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). Hazael and Ben-hadad were Syrian kings who oppressed Israel (2 Kings 8:7-15, 13:1-7, 22-25). Hazael assassinated his predecessor to seize power—a usurper God would judge. The phrase "devour the palaces" indicates total destruction of royal power. This teaches God's sovereignty over nations—He raises and deposes kings, judges tyrants, and vindicates the oppressed. No human authority exists outside His permission (Romans 13:1), and all will give account. The Reformed doctrine of common grace explains why God blesses or curses nations temporarily based on justice and mercy, while reserving final judgment for the eschaton.

Historical Context

Hazael ruled Syria approximately 842-800 BC; Ben-hadad II his son/successor (2 Kings 13:3). Syrian forces inflicted severe damage on Israel during this period. God's judgment came through Assyrian conquest—Tiglath-Pileser III destroyed Damascus in 732 BC, about 30 years after Amos prophesied. This fulfillment vindicated Amos's message: God keeps His word, sometimes through other pagan empires He sovereignly controls.

2 Kings 13:25 (Parallel theme): And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

2 Kings 13:3 (Parallel theme): And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.

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