

Deuteronomy 28:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:

Analysis

A nation of fierce countenance—Hebrew ‘az pānîm (עַז פָּנִים) means literally 'strong of face,' conveying hardness and ruthlessness. The phrase **shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young** describes total war without the ancient Near Eastern customs of mercy to non-combatants. Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions boasted of such brutality, and Rome showed no mercy during the Jewish revolts.

This verse anticipates systematic genocide. The aged, who commanded respect in Israelite culture, would be slaughtered. Children, normally spared in ancient warfare, would be killed. Josephus's Wars of the Jews records Roman soldiers throwing Jewish children from Jerusalem's walls. The 'fierce countenance' became the emotionless efficiency of imperial conquest.

Historical Context

Assyrian reliefs depict exactly this brutality—elderly and children impaled or enslaved without distinction. During the Babylonian siege (588-586 BC), Lamentations 5:12-13 confirms the treatment of elders and youth. The Romans continued this pattern, and according to Josephus, over 1.1 million Jews perished in the AD 70 siege.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's justice when covenant breaking reaches full measure?
2. How should the certainty of divine judgment inform our view of sin's trajectory?
3. In what ways does Christ's substitutionary death absorb the curse that we deserved?

Interlinear Text

גוֹי	עֶז	כְּנִים	אִשָּׁר	לֹא	יִשָּׂא
A nation	of fierce	countenance	H834	H3808	which shall not regard
H1471	H5794	H6440			H5375
כְּנִים	לִזְקֵן	וְנָעַר	לֹא	יִחַן:	
countenance	of the old	to the young	H3808	nor shew favour	
H6440	H2205	H5288		H2603	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 47:6 (Parallel theme): I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

2 Chronicles 36:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.

