

Ezekiel 4:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

Analysis

Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. This verse intensifies Ezekiel's prophetic drama by adding active prophesying to his passive lying. "Set thy face toward" (el-mitzur Yerushalayim takin panekha) repeats the hostile posture from verse 3, emphasizing God's determined opposition to the rebellious city. The uncovered arm (uzro'akha charutzah, וְזָרְעָךָ חָרוּצָה) symbolizes readiness for action—warriors bared their arms for battle (Isaiah 52:10).

"Prophesy against it" (venibbeita aleha, וַנְּבִיאֶתָ עָלֶיהָ) means to proclaim judgment, not merely predict future events. Biblical prophecy primarily declares God's will and purposes, calling people to response. Ezekiel's prophesying against Jerusalem reverses the priestly role of blessing and intercession—instead of standing between God and people pleading for mercy, Ezekiel announces inescapable doom.

This combination of symbolic action and verbal proclamation creates comprehensive witness. The visual drama captures attention; the spoken word explains meaning. Together they leave the audience without excuse. Theologically, this demonstrates that God thoroughly communicates His intentions before executing judgment. He doesn't ambush His people but clearly warns through multiple means. Yet warning doesn't necessarily prevent judgment—persistent unbelief renders even the clearest revelation ineffective (Hebrews 3:7-4:2).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern siege imagery frequently depicted warriors with bared arms wielding weapons. Ezekiel's gesture would immediately communicate military aggression to his audience. Combined with his prone position bearing iniquity and his verbal prophesying, the complete sign-act created unforgettable multi-sensory proclamation of Jerusalem's doom.

The exiles in Babylon, approximately 500 miles from Jerusalem, couldn't directly witness the city's condition. Many clung to false hopes that Jerusalem would survive and they'd soon return. False prophets encouraged this delusion (Jeremiah 28-29). Ezekiel's sustained dramatization challenged these false hopes by making Jerusalem's fall viscerally real through prophetic theater.

When Jerusalem actually fell in 586 BC, those who witnessed Ezekiel's earlier performance would remember. The prophet's credibility would be established, and survivors would recognize that their suffering fulfilled precise prophetic warning. This recognition would prepare them for receiving Ezekiel's later messages of restoration (chapters 34-37), trusting that God's promises of return were equally certain as His threats of judgment.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's clear communication of coming judgment before executing it demonstrate His justice and patience?

2. What does Ezekiel's reversal from priestly intercessor to prophetic prosecutor teach about the limits of mediation apart from repentance?
3. In what ways should prophetic warning of judgment shape our evangelism and preaching today?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵל H413	מִצַּד הַיְּמוֹת H4692	יְרוּשָׁלַם H3389	תֵּת יָדְךָ H3559	פָּנֶיךָ H6440
	toward the siege	of Jerusalem	Therefore thou shalt set	thy face
וְזִרְעֶךָ H2220	חֲשׁוּפָה הִיא H2834	וְנִבֵּאתָ H5012	עָלֶיהָ: H5921	
and thine arm	shall be uncovered	and thou shalt prophesy		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 52:10 (Parallel theme): The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Ezekiel 21:2 (Prophecy): Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel,