

Isaiah 22:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

Analysis

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem (וַאֲתֵּי יְרוּשָׁלַם סָפַרְתֶּם, ve'et-batei Yerushalaim sefarten)—conducting a census of buildings for strategic purposes. **Numbered** (סָפַר, safar) means to count, take inventory.

And the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall (וַתִּתְּצוּ הַבָּתִּים לְבַצֵּר, vattittsu habattim lebatser hachomah)—they demolished houses to obtain building materials for wall repairs, a desperate but pragmatic siege preparation. "Fortify" (בָּצַר, batsar) means to make inaccessible, strengthen defenses.

This shows the extent of their preparations: willing to sacrifice homes for military defense. It was logical—fewer buildings inside meant more materials for walls, and possibly clearer sight lines for defenders. But the repeated emphasis on human efforts (vv.8-11) without mentioning God highlights the fundamental problem: sophisticated strategy divorced from spiritual dependence. They trusted engineering and military science instead of the God who controls nations and battles.

Historical Context

Josephus records that during later Roman sieges, Jerusalem's defenders similarly demolished buildings for materials and to create defensive zones. Nehemiah earlier rebuilt Jerusalem's walls (Nehemiah 3-4), showing how important wall integrity was for ancient city defense. Breaking down houses for fortification was

an extreme measure, showing how seriously Jerusalem took the Assyrian threat. Yet Isaiah's point stands: all this preparation was futile without repentance and trust in God.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents exist to 'numbering houses and breaking them down'—desperate measures that show trust in human ingenuity over divine provision?
2. How can we distinguish between wise preparation and faithless self-reliance when facing threats or challenges?
3. What does it reveal about priorities when people will sacrifice homes for walls but won't humble themselves before God?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת H853	הִבַּיְתֵי יָם H1004	יְרוּשָׁלַם H3389	סָפַרְתֶּם H5608	וַתִּבְצְרוּ H5422
and the houses	of Jerusalem	And ye have numbered	have ye broken down	
הִבַּיְתֵי יָם H1004	לְבַצֵּר H1219	הַחוֹמָה: H2346		
and the houses	to fortify	the wall		

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