

Isaiah 49:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

Analysis

Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee. This verse prophesies a dramatic reversal: those who build will replace those who destroy. The Hebrew *banayikh* (בְּנֵיךָ, "thy children/builders") creates wordplay with *bonayikh* ("thy builders"), suggesting that returning children will rebuild what destroyers razed. The contrast between "make haste" (swift return) and "go forth" (departure) emphasizes the totality of transformation.

Theologically, this illustrates the redemptive pattern throughout Scripture: where sin abounded, grace super-abounds (Romans 5:20). God not only removes destroyers but replaces them with builders. This principle applies to individual sanctification—the Holy Spirit removes sinful patterns and builds Christlike character (2 Corinthians 5:17). It also applies to the church—though enemies may assault God's people, ultimately the gates of hell cannot prevail (Matthew 16:18).

From a Reformed perspective, this verse affirms God's sovereign control over history. The same divine decree that permitted destruction also ensures restoration. The certainty of these future reversals rests not on human capability but on God's immutable purposes. The hastening of the children suggests divine urgency in accomplishing redemptive purposes—when God's time arrives, restoration comes swiftly.

Historical Context

This prophecy addressed the aftermath of Babylonian conquest (586 BCE), which systematically destroyed Jerusalem's infrastructure and deported the population. The Babylonians pursued a policy of forced relocation to prevent rebellion, as evidenced by archaeological findings at Tel Abib and other Babylonian sites showing displaced populations.

The return under Cyrus's decree (538 BCE) and subsequent waves led by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah fulfilled this initially. Archaeological evidence from post-exilic Jerusalem shows rebuilding efforts during the Persian period. However, the ultimate fulfillment extends to the messianic age when Christ builds His church from every nation, transforming former enemies into adopted children who build God's spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life need God's rebuilding after spiritual destruction?
2. How have you seen God replace destructive influences with constructive ones?
3. How does this promise of reversal encourage you when facing opposition to God's work?

Interlinear Text

מְהֵרָה וְ	בְנֵי יְיָ	מְהַרְסֵי יְיָ	וּמְחַרְבֵי יְיָ
shall make haste	Thy children	thy destroyers	and they that made thee waste
H4116	H1121	H2040	H2717
מִמֶּנּוּ	יֵצְאוּ:		
H4480	shall go forth		
	H3318		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 51:13 (Parallel theme): And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

Isaiah 62:5 (Parallel theme): For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Ezekiel 28:24 (Parallel theme): And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.