

Jeremiah 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

Analysis

God presents the mirror image: "And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it." Where verse 7 threatened destruction, this verse promises blessing—"build" and "plant" are constructive verbs contrasting with "pluck up" and "pull down" from verse 7. These terms recall Jeremiah's commission, which included both negative and positive components (Jer 1:10).

The structure parallels verse 7—God exercises freedom to bless nations at His discretion. Just as He can pronounce judgment, He can pronounce blessing. His sovereignty operates in both directions—He builds up and tears down according to His purposes. This demonstrates divine freedom—God is not bound by human expectations or constrained by past blessings to continue them regardless of subsequent behavior.

The theological principle: divine blessings, like judgments, often come with conditions. While God's electing grace in salvation is unconditional, His providential dealings with nations involve moral accountability. Blessings promised to obedient nations can be withdrawn if they turn to evil. This warns against presumption—neither Israel nor any Christian nation can assume continued blessing despite unfaithfulness. God's gifts require stewardship and faithfulness.

Historical Context

Throughout biblical history, God built up and planted nations according to His purposes. He established Israel as His covenant people (Ex 19:5-6), raised up surrounding nations for various roles (Amos 9:7), and promised to plant Israel again after exile (Jer 24:6, 31:28, 32:41). The principle applied universally—nations experiencing blessing should recognize divine favor and respond with appropriate obedience and worship.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that divine blessing comes with responsibility challenge presumptuous attitudes about God's favor?
2. What does it mean for God to 'build and plant' a nation, and how should nations respond to such blessing?
3. How should Christians pray for their nations in light of this principle of conditional blessing?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹאמֶר רַבָּה רְאֵתִי כִּי גָּמָע

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation H5921 H5921

H7281

H1696

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מַמְלָכָה

לְבָנָה וְתִלְגְּטֹועַ

and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant

H4467

H1129

H5193

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 31:28 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 1:10 (Kingdom): See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Jeremiah 11:17 (Parallel theme): For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 (Parallel theme): A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

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