

Jeremiah 31:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This verse establishes divine symmetry between judgment and restoration. The phrase 'I have watched over them' uses shaqad (שָׁקַד), meaning to be wakeful, vigilant, attentive—the same verb from Jeremiah 1:12 where God declares 'I will hasten (shoqed) my word to perform it.' God is not passive; He actively superintends both judgment and blessing.

Five verbs describe God's judgment:

1. **pluck up** (natash, שָׁטָה—uproot),
2. **break down** (nathats, נָתַח—demolish),
3. **throw down** (haras, הָרַס—raze),
4. **destroy** (abad, אָבַד—ruin utterly), and
5. **afflict** (hara, הָרַע—bring calamity).

These verbs appeared in Jeremiah's original commission (1:10) as the negative aspect of his ministry. God actively brought this judgment on sinful Judah—it wasn't passive abandonment but sovereign discipline.

The 'so will I watch over them' establishes equal divine vigilance for restoration. Two positive verbs follow: **build** (banah, בָּנָה) and **plant** (nata, נָטַע)—agricultural and architectural images of establishing permanence. What God tore down, He will rebuild; what He uprooted, He will replant. This demonstrates God's redemptive purpose: judgment is remedial, not final. He disciplines to restore, not to abandon (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Historical Context

This verse directly references Jeremiah's call in 1:10, creating literary bookends around his forty-year ministry of judgment. The destruction came precisely as warned—Jerusalem fell in 586 BC, the temple was burned, the people were exiled. God had indeed 'watched over' His word to bring judgment. The return under Cyrus (538 BC) initiated the rebuilding phase, though full restoration awaited future fulfillment. Ezra and Nehemiah chronicle the partial return—they rebuilt the temple and walls but faced ongoing opposition and incomplete restoration. The ultimate 'building and planting' occurs through Christ, who builds His church (Matthew 16:18) and plants believers as fruitful vines (John 15:1-8).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does God's equal vigilance in both judgment and restoration teach us about His character and purposes?
2. How does this verse challenge the false dichotomy between God's justice and His mercy?
3. In what ways does God's promise to 'build and plant' after 'plucking up and breaking down' give hope during seasons of discipline or suffering?

Interlinear Text

כָּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה ה'

H1961

H834

And it shall come to pass that like as I have watched over

אֲשֶׁקֶד ד'

H8245

עֲלֵיהֶם

H5921

לָנֶת וְשׁ

them to pluck up

H5428

וְלָנֶת וְיָ

and to break down

H5422

וְלָהֵרֶס

and to throw down

H2040

וְלִהְיֹאבֵד

and to destroy

H6

וְלָהֵרֶס עַ

and to afflict

H7489

H3651

And it shall come to pass that like as I have watched over

אֲשֶׁקֶד ד'

H8245

עֲלֵיהֶם

H5921

לָבֵן וְת

them to build

H1129

וְלָנֶת וְעַ

and to plant

H5193

נֹאמַם

saith

H5002

יְהוָה:

the LORD

H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 24:6 (Parallel theme): For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

Jeremiah 1:10 (Parallel theme): 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 44:27 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

Jeremiah 45:4 (References Lord): Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

Acts 15:16 (Parallel theme): After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

Jeremiah 32:41 (Parallel theme): Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Daniel 9:14 (References Lord): Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

Amos 9:11 (Parallel theme): In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: