

Jeremiah 34:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: God commands Jeremiah to deliver an unambiguous message of doom directly to King Zedekiah. The double formula "Thus saith the LORD" emphasizes divine authority—this is not Jeremiah's opinion but God's certain decree. The phrase "the God of Israel" (Elohei Yisrael) is laden with covenant irony: Israel's covenant God now decrees Israel's capital's destruction. The Hebrew construction "I will give" (natati) uses the prophetic perfect tense, indicating certainty as though already accomplished.

He shall burn it with fire fulfills the covenant curse of Deuteronomy 28:52: God warned that disobedience would bring enemy destruction of fortified cities. Archaeological excavation of Jerusalem's destruction layers confirms widespread burning from Babylon's 586 BCE assault. The fire represents not merely military strategy but divine judgment—God's holiness consuming what covenant violation defiled.

Theologically, this verse demonstrates:

1. Prophetic messages often contradict human hope but fulfill divine justice

2. God's covenant relationship intensifies judgment when violated—"the God of Israel" destroys Israel's city
3. divine sovereignty governs historical outcomes—Nebuchadnezzar acts as God's instrument
4. prophets must speak unwelcome truth despite personal cost or royal opposition.

The Reformed understanding that God ordains all events, including judgment, finds clear biblical warrant here.

Historical Context

This prophecy came during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BCE), when Zedekiah desperately sought deliverance. Jeremiah's consistent message contradicted the false prophets who promised peace (Jeremiah 28). Zedekiah, installed as Babylon's puppet king after Jehoiachin's exile (597 BCE), rebelled by making alliances with Egypt, violating his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 17:13-19). This rebellion combined political treachery with covenant violation—trusting Egypt rather than God (Isaiah 31:1). The prophecy's literal fulfillment (2 Kings 25:8-10) validated Jeremiah's ministry and demonstrated God's word's absolute reliability.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How should Christians respond when God's clear word contradicts cultural optimism or personal preference?
2. What does Zedekiah's response to unwelcome prophecy reveal about our hearts when confronted with biblical truth we'd rather not hear?
3. In what ways does God's use of foreign nations as judgment instruments challenge simplistic 'God and country' nationalism?

Interlinear Text

כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	הֵלֵךְ	אָמַר	אֵל
H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	the God	of Israel	Go	Thus saith	H413
	H559	H3068	H430	H3478	H1980	H559	
יְהוָה	אָמַר	כֹּה	אֵל	יְהוּדָה	מֶלֶךְ	צִדְקִיָּהוּ	
H3068	Thus saith	H3541	H413	of Judah	king	to Zedekiah	
	H559			H3063	H4428	H6667	
מֶלֶךְ	בְּיָד	הַזֹּאת	הַעִיר	אֶת	נָתַן	הִנֵּנִי	
H4428	into the hand	H2063	this city	H853	Behold I will give	H2005	
	H3027		H5892		H5414		
בָּאֵשׁ:	וְשָׂרַף	הָ	בָּבֶל	לְ			
it with fire	and he shall burn		of Babylon				
H784	H8313		H894				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 21:10 (Kingdom): For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

Jeremiah 34:22 (References Lord): Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

Jeremiah 32:3 (Kingdom): For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;