

Jeremiah 37:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Analysis

For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire—this hyperbolic statement emphasizes the absolute certainty of God's decreed judgment. Even in the impossible scenario where Judah defeated Babylon's entire army, leaving only anashim medukkaim (אֲנָשִׁים מְדֻקְקִים, wounded/pierced men), those wounded soldiers would still accomplish Jerusalem's destruction.

The imagery is deliberately extreme to make the theological point: Jerusalem's fall does not depend on Babylonian military superiority but on divine decree. God has determined judgment; therefore, no human strategy or military victory can prevent it. The phrase ish be'oholo (אִישׁ בְּאֹהֱלוֹ, every man in his tent) pictures incapacitated soldiers barely able to stand, yet they would still succeed because God ordained it.

This teaches a crucial theological principle: when God decrees something, it becomes metaphysically certain regardless of apparent impossibilities. Conversely, when God promises deliverance, no enemy force can prevent it (Romans 8:31). The question is never human strength versus human strength, but whether we align with or resist God's revealed will. Judah's tragedy was fighting against God's purposes rather than submitting to His discipline.

Historical Context

This hyperbole recalls similar prophetic statements emphasizing divine sovereignty: Isaiah declared that even if Israel were 'as the sand of the sea,' only a remnant would return (Isaiah 10:22). Amos proclaimed that fleeing from a lion only to meet a bear illustrates the impossibility of escaping God's judgment (Amos 5:19). Jeremiah used stark imagery throughout his ministry to penetrate hardened hearts. Tragically, Judah's leaders ignored these warnings, trusting in fortifications, alliances, and temple rituals while persisting in covenant unfaithfulness.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this hyperbole illustrate the futility of resisting God's decreed judgment?
2. What is the difference between trusting God's power to deliver us and presuming He must deliver us despite persistent disobedience?
3. In what ways might we be fighting against God's purposes rather than submitting to His discipline?

Interlinear Text

כִּי H3588	אֲמַר H518	הֲפִיטָם H5221	כָּל H3605	חֵי יָל H2428	כַּשְׂדִּים H3778
		For though ye had smitten		the whole army	of the Chaldeans
הַנִּלְחָמִים H3898	אֶתְכֶם H854	וְנִשְׁאַרוּ H7604	בָּם H0	אֵשׁ H376	
		that fight		against you and there remained	every man
מִדָּקָר יָם H1856	אֵשׁ H376	בְּאֶהְלוֹ H168	יָקוּ וְיָמֹו H6965	וְיִשְׂרָפוּ H8313	
		but wounded		every man	in his tent
אֶת H853	הַעִיר H5892	הִזָּאת H2063	בְּאֵשׁ H784		
		this city		with fire	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 30:17 (Parallel theme): One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

Joel 2:11 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?