

Jeremiah 39:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

Analysis

In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. This verse opens the climactic account of Jerusalem's fall, the catastrophic event Jeremiah prophesied for over forty years. The precise chronological notation (ninth year, tenth month—January 588 BCE) emphasizes historical reality—this isn't myth but recorded history. The dating connects with 2 Kings 25:1 and Ezekiel 24:1-2, demonstrating the event's traumatic importance across multiple biblical witnesses.

The phrase "Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army" stresses the overwhelming force arrayed against Jerusalem. Yet from the prophetic perspective, this represents God's judgment instrument, not merely human military action. Jeremiah consistently portrayed Babylon as God's servant executing covenant curses (25:9; 27:6; 43:10). The theological interpretation of historical events—seeing God's hand in political and military affairs—exemplifies biblical historiography.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. Prophetic warnings culminate in historical fulfillment—God's word proves true
2. covenant violations bring covenant curses through concrete historical means

3. God sovereignly uses pagan nations to discipline His people
4. precise historical records validate biblical reliability.

The Reformed doctrine of providence affirms God's active governance of all events, including military conflicts, to accomplish His purposes.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BCE) ruled the Neo-Babylonian Empire at its apex. His siege of Jerusalem followed Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylonian vassalage, breaking the oath sworn in God's name (Ezekiel 17:11-21). The siege began in January 588 BCE and lasted approximately thirty months, ending in July 586 BCE —one of antiquity's longest sieges.

Archaeological evidence extensively documents this period. Destruction layers at Judean sites (Lachish, Azekah, Ramat Rahel) show systematic Babylonian conquest. The Babylonian Chronicle confirms Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns in the Levant. Excavations of Jerusalem's "Burnt House" and "House of the Bullae" show the conflagration that destroyed the city. The historical precision of biblical chronology finds remarkable confirmation in these extra-biblical sources, validating Scripture's historical reliability.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the precise historical fulfillment of prophetic warnings strengthen your confidence in God's word?
2. In what ways does understanding political and military events as expressions of God's purposes affect your view of current world affairs?
3. How should the reality of divine judgment on covenant-breaking nations inform Christian political engagement?

Interlinear Text

בְּעָשָׂר	וּ	בְּחַדְשָׁה	וְיְהוָה	הַמֶּלֶךְ	לְצִדְקַת	הוּא	בְּפִשְׁעִית	בְּשָׁנָה	הַשְׁנִית
year	In the ninth	of Zedekiah	king	of Judah	month	in the tenth			
H8141	H8671	H6667	H4428	H3063	H2320	H6224			
אָל	פְּרִילּוֹ	וְכָל	בְּכָל	מֶלֶךְ	מֶלֶךְ	בְּכָל	וְכָל	מֶלֶךְ	בְּכָל
came	Nebuchadrezzar	king	of Babylon	H3605	and all his army	H2428			
H935	H5019	H4428	H894						
עַלֵּיכֶם	בְּאָרֶץ	בְּאָרֶץ	בְּאָרֶץ						
against Jerusalem	and they besieged			H5921					
H3389	H6696								

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