

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

הַעֲשֹׂרִי יָ בַחֹדֶשׁ יְהוּדָה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְצִדְקִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁעִית בְּשָׁנָה הַ
year In the ninth of Zedekiah king of Judah month in the tenth
H8141 H8671 H6667 H4428 H3063 H2320 H6224

אָלָּהּ וְכָל חֵילוֹ וְבָבֶל לְמֶלֶךְ נְבוּכַדְרֶצַּר הָבָּא
came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon H3605 and all his army H413
H935 H5019 H4428 H894 H2428

עָלֶיהָ: וַאֲרָבוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם
against Jerusalem and they besieged H5921
H3389 H6696

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