

Jeremiah 45:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. God's answer to Baruch begins not with comfort but with sobering theological reality. The imagery of building/breaking and planting/plucking reverses the language of Jeremiah's original commission (1:10)—there called to "root out, and to pull down" but also "to build, and to plant." The present historical moment requires the destructive phase; restoration comes later (30-33).

The phrase "even this whole land" emphasizes the comprehensive scope of coming judgment. No city, region, or individual escapes. In this context, Baruch's personal ambitions become trivial—how can one seek great things during national catastrophe? God reorients Baruch's perspective from personal advancement to historical reality. This doesn't diminish Baruch's value but places it in proper context.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. God's covenant involves both blessing and curse, building and breaking, depending on the people's response
2. individual concerns must be understood within God's larger purposes
3. times of divine judgment require adjusted expectations about personal prosperity

4. God's work sometimes involves tearing down before rebuilding, death before resurrection.

This principle finds ultimate expression in Christ's death preceding resurrection and glory, the pattern for all Christian discipleship (Mark 8:34-35).

Historical Context

This prophecy directly preceded Jerusalem's destruction by fourteen years (605-586 BCE). The "building" God would break down included Solomon's temple (built 967-960 BCE, destroyed 586 BCE), Jerusalem's walls, the Davidic monarchy's practical administration, and the land's settled agricultural life. The "planting" to be plucked up referred to the nation itself, planted in the land under Joshua but now facing exile.

The comprehensive nature of this judgment explains Baruch's discouragement. He could see destruction coming and recognized his life's work preserving prophecies would only document national catastrophe. Yet this very work—preserving God's word during judgment—would sustain the exiled community and facilitate eventual restoration. Baruch couldn't see his scribal work's ultimate significance, but God used it to shape all subsequent Judaism and Christianity. The historical perspective validates divine providence in seemingly discouraging circumstances.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God's purposes sometimes require 'tearing down' before 'building up' help you endure difficult seasons?
2. In what ways might personal ambitions need readjustment when God is doing a larger work that involves discipline or pruning?

3. How does Baruch's example encourage faithful service even when you cannot see the full significance or outcome?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אָמַר	אֶלְיוֹן	כִּי	אָמַר	אֶלְיוֹן	יְהִי
H3541	Thus shalt thou say	H413	H3541	Thus shalt thou say	H559	unto him The LORD
	H559					H3068
אֲשֶׁר	בָּנְיָה	בָּנְיָה	אֲשֶׁר	בָּנְיָה	אֲשֶׁר	בָּנְיָה
H2009	thus Behold that which I have built	H1129	H589	will I break down	H2040	H853
H834	and that which I have planted	H5193	H589	I will pluck up	H5428	H853
						H3605
כִּי	אָמַר	אֶלְיוֹן	כִּי	אָמַר	אֶלְיוֹן	כִּי
even this whole land	H1931		H1931			
H776						

Additional Cross-References

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 31:28 (References Lord): 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.

Jeremiah 11:17 (References Lord): For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

