

Jeremiah 52:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

Analysis

So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. This brief verse compresses approximately 30 months of unimaginable suffering into a single statement. The siege began in Zedekiah's ninth year, tenth month, tenth day (v. 4) and lasted **unto the eleventh year**—specifically until the fourth month, ninth day (v. 6). The Hebrew matsor (מָצוֹר, besieged) comes from the root meaning "to confine, bind, or hem in," conveying the claustrophobic horror of a city cut off from all outside resources.

The duration's significance becomes clear in the next verse: by the siege's end, **the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land** (v. 6). Lamentations provides harrowing details: nobles who were "purer than snow" became "blacker than coal" from starvation (Lamentations 4:7-8); nursing mothers had no milk (Lamentations 4:4); desperate people ate their own children (Lamentations 2:20, 4:10). Ezekiel, prophesying in Babylon, received visions of Jerusalem's horrors (Ezekiel 4-5) and was told to act out the siege symbolically. This fulfilled Moses' covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28:53-57, demonstrating God's faithfulness to His word—both blessings for obedience and curses for rebellion.

Historical Context

The siege of Jerusalem (January 588 - July 586 BC) represents one of ancient Israel's darkest periods. Archaeological evidence shows the systematic Babylonian

destruction of Judean cities before concentrating on Jerusalem. The temporary lifting of the siege when Egypt approached (Jeremiah 37:5) gave false hope that was cruelly dashed when Babylon returned. Starvation became so severe that the city's population dropped dramatically—estimates suggest tens of thousands died from famine and disease before the walls were breached. When the city finally fell (Tammuz 9, 586 BC), the temple was burned on Av 9-10, dates that became permanent fast days in Judaism (Zechariah 7:3-5, 8:19). The trauma of this siege shaped Jewish consciousness for centuries, referenced in Lamentations, commemorated in annual fasts, and serving as a warning against covenant unfaithfulness. Only the AD 70 Roman destruction of Jerusalem rivals this catastrophe in Jewish historical memory.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the nearly 30-month siege teach about God's patience in judgment and the seriousness of persistent rebellion?
2. How should the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28's covenant curses in this siege shape our understanding of God's faithfulness to His word?
3. In what ways did Jerusalem's fall serve both as judgment for that generation and as prophetic warning for future generations?

Interlinear Text

וַתֵּבֶ אֶ	הָעִיר	בְּמָצוֹר	עַד	עֲשֵׂתִי י	עֲשָׂרָה הַ	שָׁנָה הַ
So	the city	was besieged	H5704	unto the eleventh	H6240	year
H935	H5892	H4692		H6249		H8141
לְמֶלֶךְ	צִדְקִיָּהוּ:					
of king	Zedekiah					
H4428	H6667					

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