

Jeremiah 52:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

Analysis

And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. This verse records the humanitarian catastrophe preceding Jerusalem's fall. The date (July 18, 586 BCE, per verse 1-2 chronology) marks when famine reached unbearable severity after thirty months of siege. The phrase "no bread for the people of the land" indicates complete food supply exhaustion—not mere shortages but total absence. Lamentations 4:9-10 describes the horror: people preferring death by sword to slow starvation, even cannibalism occurring.

The famine represents covenant curse fulfillment (Deuteronomy 28:53-57). God's warnings weren't empty threats but promises kept when repentance didn't come. The physical hunger symbolizes deeper spiritual starvation—generations had rejected God's word, producing souls as famished as bodies. Amos's prophecy finds fulfillment: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread... but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11).

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. Covenant violations bring tangible, historical consequences
2. God's judgments often work through natural means (famine, plague, sword) while remaining divine in origin

3. physical suffering can express spiritual realities
4. God's patience has limits—persistent rejection eventually brings prophesied judgment.

The solemnity warns against presuming on grace while persisting in sin.

Historical Context

Ancient siege warfare deliberately aimed at starvation. Babylon surrounded Jerusalem, cutting off food supplies and allowing defenders to exhaust internal stores. Archaeological evidence from other ancient Near Eastern sieges (e.g., Lachish) shows similar tactics. The thirty-month duration of Jerusalem's siege (January 588 to July 586 BCE) exceeded most ancient sieges, explaining the famine's severity.

The date is commemorated in Jewish tradition as the fast of the fourth month (Zechariah 8:19). The traumatic memory shaped Jewish consciousness for centuries. Jesus later wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), prophesying another destruction (70 CE) that would repeat this horror. The historical recurrence demonstrates that rejecting God's word leads repeatedly to judgment—a pattern continuing until final judgment (Matthew 24:15-21; Revelation 6:8).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the literal fulfillment of covenant curses challenge modern tendencies to minimize biblical warnings of judgment?
2. In what ways might spiritual famine (lack of God's word) be more dangerous than physical hunger?
3. How should awareness of judgment's historical reality affect evangelism and prayer for those outside Christ?

