

Lamentations 2:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

Analysis

A sobering theological statement: "The LORD hath done that which he had devised" (asah YHWH asher zamam, מִתְּמֻמָּה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם). The verb zamam (זָמַם) means to plan, purpose, devise. This wasn't divine reaction to unexpected circumstances but execution of predetermined judgment. God's warnings weren't empty threats but promises of certain consequences for persistent covenant breaking. The phrase "he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old" (bitse imrato asher tsivah mimei-kedem) references covenant curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 describes escalating curses culminating in exile—exactly what occurred. God is absolutely faithful to His word, whether promises or warnings. This should inspire both confidence in His promises and appropriate fear of His warnings. The result: "he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied" (haras velo chamal). The verb chamal means to spare, pity, have compassion. In judgment, God withheld mercy temporarily because mercy without justice would validate sin. "He hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee" shows that God's sovereignty extends even to enemy actions. Yet this severe picture sets up chapter 3's hope: the same God who faithfully executes warnings will faithfully fulfill promises of restoration (3:22-32).

Historical Context

The covenant warnings given "in the days of old" refer to Moses' farewell addresses in Deuteronomy. After reviewing God's faithfulness and giving the law, Moses laid out blessings for obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) and curses for disobedience (28:15-68). These weren't arbitrary threats but covenant stipulations that defined Israel's relationship with Yahweh. Specific warnings that came to pass include: cities laid waste (28:16), siege conditions causing famine (28:52-53), cannibalism during siege (28:53-57, fulfilled in 2 Kings 6:28-29 and Lamentations 4:10), death by sword and captivity (28:41, 64), exile among nations where they'd find no rest (28:64-65), and serving foreign gods (28:36). For over 800 years, these warnings stood. Prophets repeatedly cited them (Isaiah 1:19-20, Jeremiah 11:3-5, Ezekiel 33:12-16). The Northern Kingdom's destruction by Assyria in 722 BC should have warned Judah, but they failed to learn (2 Kings 17:13-20, Jeremiah 3:6-10). When Babylon came, God executed exactly what He promised centuries before, demonstrating absolute faithfulness to His word—a terrifying and reassuring reality. This principle—that God always does what He promises—is foundational to biblical faith. Numbers 23:19 declares, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?" His immutability guarantees both judgment on sin and salvation for believers.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's perfect faithfulness in executing warnings give us confidence that He will equally fulfill His promises of salvation and eternal life?
2. What does it mean that God 'devised' and 'purposed' judgment from ancient times, and how does this relate to His sovereignty and foreknowledge?

3. How should the reality that God sometimes acts 'without pity' in judgment inform our evangelism and urgency in calling sinners to repentance?
4. In what ways does Christ satisfy both God's justice (executing threatened judgment) and mercy (fulfilling promised salvation) simultaneously at the cross?

Interlinear Text

בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל
hath done	The LORD	H834	that which he had devised
H6213	H3068		he hath fulfilled
his word	H834	H6680	in the days
H565			of old
בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל
he hath thrown down	H3808	and hath not pitied	to rejoice
H2040		H2550	H5921
בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל
and he hath caused thine enemy	H341	over thee he hath set up	the horn
		H7311	H7161
בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל	בְּאֵל
of thine adversaries	H6862		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:42 (Parallel theme): Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

Ezekiel 5:11 (References Lord): Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

Ezekiel 8:18 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Lamentations 1:5 (References Lord): Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

Psalms 38:16 (Parallel theme): For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

Jeremiah 18:11 (References Lord): Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

Ezekiel 9:10 (Parallel theme): And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

Lamentations 2:8 (References Lord): The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

Micah 2:3 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.