

Psalms 37:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

Analysis

I have seen the wicked in great power (רָאִיתִי רָשָׁע עָרִיץ, ra'iti rasha 'aritz)—Aritz means terrifying, ruthless, tyrannical. **And spreading himself like a green bay tree** (וּמִתְעַרֵּה כְּאֶזְרַח רֶאֱנָן, u-mitra'eh ke-ezrach ra'anan)—Ezrach is a native-born tree, deeply rooted; ra'anan means green, luxuriant, thriving.

David uses vivid natural imagery for the wicked's apparent success. The spreading tree suggests unchallenged growth, deep roots, vibrant health—everything seeming permanent. This creates dramatic tension: how can we trust God's justice when evil so obviously prospers? David names reality honestly, but verse 36 will reveal shocking impermanence.

Historical Context

Ancient Israel witnessed powerful tyrants—Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar—whose empires seemed unshakeable. David himself watched Saul's royal power for years. Roman power appeared eternal in Jesus's day. Yet every earthly empire mentioned in Scripture has fallen, confirming this wisdom.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Which contemporary prospering evildoers most challenge your faith in divine justice?
2. How does this verse validate honest questioning about why the wicked prosper temporarily?
3. What does it mean to see temporal success clearly without letting it define ultimate reality?

Interlinear Text

רָאִיתִי	רָשָׁע	עַל יֶזַע	וּמִתְפַּרֵּץ ה	כְּאֶזֶב ח
I have seen	the wicked	in great power	and spreading	bay tree
H7200	H7563	H6184	H6168	H249

כַּעֲצֵן:
himself like a green
H7488

Additional Cross-References

Job 5:3 (Parallel theme): I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.

Ezekiel 31:18 (Parallel theme): To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

Esther 5:11 (Parallel theme): And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

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