

Zechariah 12:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

Analysis

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. The metaphor shifts from "cup of trembling" to "**burdensome stone**" (eben ma'amalah, אבן מעלה)—a heavy stone that injures those attempting to lift it. Ancient athletic competitions included lifting heavy stones; attempting to move a stone too heavy resulted in severe injury, hernias, or crushed limbs. The phrase "burden themselves with it" (ha-amelim otah) means those who load it upon themselves to carry or move it.

The devastating consequence: "**shall be cut in pieces**" (sarot yissaretu, טרוטוּ) —literally "gashed, they shall be gashed" or "severely lacerated." The Hebrew uses emphatic repetition suggesting terrible wounds. Those who attack Jerusalem won't merely fail—they'll be destroyed in the attempt. This intensifies verse 2's judgment: first staggering (cup of trembling), now laceration (burdensome stone).

The scope expands: "**though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.**" No coalition, however universal, can successfully attack God's chosen city. This echoes Psalm 2:1-4 where nations conspire against the LORD and His Anointed, but God laughs at their futile rebellion. The prophecy assures that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by human opposition, regardless of numbers or

power. Jerusalem becomes immovable, unmovable—fixed by divine decree, and any attempt to dislodge it results in the attacker's destruction.

Historical Context

Zechariah's prophecy envisions escalating hostility: surrounding peoples (v. 2), then all earth's peoples (v. 3) gather against Jerusalem. This universal coalition hasn't occurred historically—even Rome's siege involved only Roman legions, not global alliance. The prophecy points forward to eschatological events, possibly Armageddon when nations gather against Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 16:14-16, 19:19). The church fathers and Reformers saw this fulfilled spiritually: all worldly powers oppose God's kingdom, yet the church prevails because Christ defends her. Historically, various empires attempted to eradicate Christianity—Roman persecution, Islamic conquests, Communist suppression, secular hostility—yet the church not only survives but grows. Those regimes that most violently opposed Christianity (Roman, Soviet, etc.) collapsed or converted, proving the "burdensome stone" principle: attacking God's people destroys the attacker. Ultimately, Christ will return when the world unites against Jerusalem/the church, and He will destroy all hostile powers definitively (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 19:11-21).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does the image of Jerusalem as an unmovable, injurious stone teach about attempting to oppose God's purposes?
2. How has history demonstrated that empires and ideologies attacking the church ultimately destroy themselves?
3. In what ways does knowing that God's kingdom is indestructible encourage perseverance when facing cultural or personal opposition?

Interlinear Text

אֵן יְרוּשָׁלָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר יָמַן בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְכֹל הַ

H1961 And in that day H1931 H853 H3389 H68

H3117 H7760 H3389 H68

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themselves with it shall be cut in pieces

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ישֶׁב צָה

themselves with it shall be cut in pieces

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be gathered together though all the people of the earth

H622 H5921 H3605 H1471 H776

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:44 (Parallel theme): And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Luke 20:18 (Parallel theme): Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Zechariah 14:6 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

Zechariah 13:1 (References Jerusalem): In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.