

Ezekiel 11:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.

Analysis

God continues His message to the exiles: 'Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.' This promise revolutionizes temple theology. Though physically distant from Jerusalem's temple, God promises to be 'a little sanctuary' (miqdash me'at, מִקְדָּשׁ מְאַט) to the exiles.

The phrase 'little sanctuary' indicates God's presence isn't confined to the Jerusalem temple. He goes with His people in exile, making Himself accessible even in pagan Babylon. This foreshadows the New Testament truth that God's presence isn't limited to buildings but dwells among His people (Matthew 18:20, John 4:21-24, 1 Corinthians 3:16). The exiles, though distant from the physical temple, remained near to God Himself—a profound theological development.

From a Reformed perspective, this passage teaches that God's covenant faithfulness transcends circumstances. Exile doesn't mean abandonment. God's presence becomes portable, accompanying His people wherever His sovereignty places them. This anticipates the church age where believers themselves become God's temple, individually and corporately. True worship isn't location-dependent but Spirit-enabled, wherever believers gather in faith.

Historical Context

This promise had revolutionary implications for Jewish theology. The temple represented God's dwelling place (1 Kings 8:10-13, Psalm 132:13-14). How could God be present in unclean Babylon? Yet Ezekiel receives visions and prophetic word in Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1-3), Daniel experiences God's revelation there (Daniel 2, 7-12), and exiled Jews gather for prayer and instruction (Psalm 137, Ezekiel 8:1, 14:1).

This portable sanctuary concept enabled Judaism to survive without temple and land. After 70 AD when Rome destroyed the second temple, Jewish faith continued through synagogue worship and Torah study, building on principles established during Babylonian exile. For Christians, this points to Christ as ultimate temple (John 2:19-21) and the church as God's dwelling place (Ephesians 2:19-22), making God's presence universally accessible rather than geographically limited.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to be a 'little sanctuary' wherever you are transform understanding of His presence?
2. What does portable sanctuary teach about worship's essence being relational rather than locational?
3. In what ways does this passage comfort believers facing displacement, persecution, or distance from faith communities?

Interlinear Text

בָּן	אָדָם	אָחָת	אָחָת יְהוָה	אָחָת יְהוָה	אָחָת יְהוָה	אָנָשִׁים	גָּאֲלָתָה בָּהּ	וְכֹל
Son	of man	even thy brethren	even thy brethren	the men	of thy kindred			
H1121	H120	H251	H251	H582		H1353		H3605

בְּ יִתְ	לְ	אָמֵר	לְ	יִשְׁרָאֵל	כָּל	הַ	יִשְׁרָאֵל	בְּ יִתְ
and all the house	of Israel			H3605	H834	have said		H0

מַעַל בְּמִלְחָמָה יְרוּשָׁלָם יְשָׁבֵת
H5921 H3389 H3427 wholly are they unto whom the inhabitants
Get you far of Jerusalem

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 33:24 (References Israel): Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.

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