

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 מֵעַט) 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

וְכָל	גְּאֻלְתְּךָ	אֲנָשֵׁי י	אֲחֵי יְךָ	אֲחֵי יְךָ	אֲדָם	בֶּן
	of thy kindred	the men	even thy brethren	even thy brethren	even thy brethren	Son
H3605	H1353	H582	H251	H251	H251	H1121
לָהֶם	אָמְרוּ וְ	אֲשֶׁר	כָּל הַ	יֹשְׁבֵי ל	בְּ יֵת	
	have said		of Israel	and all the house		
H0	H559	H834	H3605	H1004		
יָמַעַל	בְּחִקּוֹ	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	יֹשְׁבֵי י			
Get you far	of Jerusalem	wholly are they	unto whom the inhabitants			
H5921	H3389	H7368	H3427			
לְמוֹכָשָׁהּ:	הָאֵץ רֶץ	נָתַתָּה	הָיָא לָנוּ	יְהוָה		
in possession	unto us is this land	given	from the LORD			
H4181	H776	H5414	H3068			

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.