

Ezekiel 11:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:

Analysis

God's words to Ezekiel—'these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city'—indict Jerusalem's leadership for active evil. The Hebrew *chashav* (חָשַׁב, 'devise') indicates intentional planning and scheming. The *aven* (אָוֵן, 'mischief' or 'iniquity') they devise is not accidental sin but calculated wickedness. Their 'wicked counsel' (*etsah ra'ah*, עֲצָה רָעָה) led the nation astray.

The verse reveals leadership's moral failure. Rather than guiding the people toward covenant faithfulness, these princes promoted policies and attitudes contrary to God's will. Subsequent verses (11:3) show they encouraged false security, telling people 'it is not near; let us build houses'—denying imminent judgment and promoting complacency despite prophetic warnings. Bad leadership multiplies evil by influencing many toward sin.

From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates total depravity's manifestation in leadership—sin affects not just individuals but corrupts institutions and systems of authority. The princes' wicked counsel demonstrates how sin permeates social structures. Yet it also shows God's righteous judgment targets not just individual sin but systemic evil. God holds corrupt leaders accountable for leading others astray, a sobering warning for all in authority (Matthew 18:6-7).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's final years before 586 BC featured political confusion and poor leadership. After Jehoiachin's deportation in 597 BC, King Zedekiah ruled as a Babylonian puppet, surrounded by advisors who oscillated between submission to Babylon and foolish rebellion. Despite Jeremiah's counsel to submit (Jeremiah 27-28), these leaders pursued independence, leading to disastrous rebellion, siege, and destruction.

The 'wicked counsel' likely included both political advice (rebel against Babylon) and spiritual leadership (syncretism, idolatry, oppression of the vulnerable). Jeremiah 24:1-10 distinguishes between the 'good figs' (those exiled in 597) and 'bad figs' (those remaining in Jerusalem under poor leadership). Ezekiel's condemnation of the twenty-five men confirms they represented the corrupt remnant leadership that would drag Jerusalem to its final destruction.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does leadership's influence for good or evil multiply individual sin's effects throughout a community?
2. What responsibility do you bear for the counsel and influence you give to others in your sphere of authority?
3. In what ways does this passage warn against following popular leaders whose advice contradicts God's Word?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵל י	בֶּן	אָדָם	אֵלָּה	הַאֲנָשִׁים	הַחֲשֹׁבִים
Then said	H413	he unto me Son	of man	H428	H376	that devise
H559		H1121	H120			H2803
אֶוֹן	וְהִיטֵעַ	יְהוָה	בְּעִיר	בְּעִיר	הַזֹּאת:	
mischief	and give	counsel	wicked	in this city	H2063	
H205	H3289	H6098	H7451	H5892		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 30:1 (Parallel theme): Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

Psalms 52:2 (Parallel theme): Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

Jeremiah 5:5 (Parallel theme): I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.