

Ezekiel 12:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

Analysis

God provides interpretation: 'And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.' The sign-act's meaning is explained—Jerusalem's inhabitants will experience exactly what Ezekiel dramatically portrayed.

The phrase 'eat their bread with carefulness' (be-de'agah, בְּדָאָגָה) and 'drink their water with astonishment' (be-shimmamon, בְּשִׁמְמָמָן, meaning horror/devastation) describe the psychological trauma of siege. The land's desolation is explicitly connected to 'violence of all them that dwell therein'—judgment isn't arbitrary but response to systemic violence and injustice that characterized pre-exilic Judah.

From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates the principle that sin brings natural consequences. God's judgment often involves removing restraining grace and allowing sin's destructive outcomes to fully manifest (Romans 1:24-28). The violence they practiced against others returns upon their own heads (Obadiah 15).

God's justice is both retributive (active punishment) and consequential (reaping what's sown).

Historical Context

The 'violence of all them that dwell therein' refers to social injustice that prophets repeatedly condemned. Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all indicted Israel for oppressing the vulnerable, corrupt justice, false worship combined with unethical behavior (Isaiah 1:15-17, Micah 3:9-12, Jeremiah 7:5-7, Ezekiel 22:6-12). Systematic exploitation and violence characterized the society.

The siege's horror fulfilled covenant curses (Leviticus 26:26, Deuteronomy 28:52-57). Lamentations describes mothers eating their children during the famine (Lamentations 4:10). Josephus reports similar horrors during Rome's 70 AD siege. Ezekiel's trembling-while-eating sign precisely foreshadowed these terrible realities, demonstrating genuine prophetic foreknowledge.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does understanding judgment as consequence of sin (not just punishment) affect your view of God's character?
2. What does the connection between social violence and national judgment teach about corporate responsibility?
3. In what ways do modern societies practice systemic violence that may bring similar judgment?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר אֶל־עַם־בְּאֶרֶץ־בָּהּ אָמַר
 And say unto the people of the land And say the Lord GOD
 H559 H413 H5971 H127 H3541 H559 H136 H3069
 לְחִמָּם יְשָׁבֵם יְמִינָה אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלָם
 of all them that dwell of Jerusalem and of the land of Israel their bread
 H3427 H3389 H413 H776 H3478 H3899
 וְיִאֱכֶל בְּדָאג הַמִּמְיָם וְיִשְׁתַּחַת וְיִשְׁתַּבְּחַת
 with carefulness They shall eat their water with astonishment and drink
 H1674 H398 H4325 H8078 H8354
 מִמְלָא הַיּוֹם אֶרְצָה לְמַעַן
 may be desolate and of the land from all that is therein
 H4616 H3456 H776 H4393
 בְּבָהּ יְשָׁבֵם כָּל־יְמִינָה
 because of the violence of all them that dwell
 H2555 H3605 H3427 H0

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 7:14 (Parallel theme): But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

Ezekiel 6:14 (References Lord): So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Micah 7:13 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

Jeremiah 10:22 (Parallel theme): Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.

1 Corinthians 10:28 (References Lord): But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

Ezekiel 7:23 (Parallel theme): Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org