

Ezekiel 14:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

Analysis

God addresses Deliver neither sons in this verse. Personal righteousness insufficient for others, demonstrating that God sees hearts and motives, not just external religious practices. The scenario reveals the futility of seeking God while maintaining idolatry—true inquiry requires undivided allegiance. Attempting to consult God while harboring idols represents the divided heart God rejects.

The passage illustrates that religious externals without heart reality constitute hypocrisy God abhors. Mere consultation of prophets, attendance at worship, or performance of rituals means nothing if the heart remains idolatrous. God demands total allegiance, not partial commitment combined with idolatrous hedging. The call is to genuine repentance involving both turning from sin and turning to God.

From a Reformed perspective, this passage teaches the doctrine of regeneration's necessity. External religion without heart transformation cannot save. Only the Spirit's work creating new hearts produces genuine faith and repentance. Attempts to maintain both God and idols reveal unregenerate hearts needing divine recreation, not mere moral reformation.

Historical Context

The elders coming to Ezekiel (v. 1) represented Jerusalem's leadership or fellow exiles seeking prophetic guidance. However, God revealed their secret idolatry—they maintained household gods or idolatrous practices while outwardly seeking Yahweh. This duplicity characterized pre-exilic Israel and necessitated judgment. Personal righteousness insufficient for others within this context of widespread syncretism where people attempted to hedge spiritual bets by worshiping both Yahweh and other deities. Archaeological discoveries of household figurines and foreign cult objects in Israelite homes confirm this pattern. The practice violated the Shema's demand for exclusive love and loyalty to Yahweh (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this passage expose the futility of religious practices divorced from heart reality?
2. What modern idols do people attempt to maintain while still seeking God's blessing?
3. In what ways does Deliver neither sons illustrate the necessity of genuine conversion versus mere external religion?

Interlinear Text

שָׁלַשׁ	שָׁתַּ	בְּאַלְהָ	בְּאַנְשׁ	יִם	בְּתוּכָה	סִי	אָנָּ	תָּאָם
Though these three		H376	H428		were in it	as I live	H589	saith
H7969					H8432	H2416		H5002
אֱלֹהִים	אֲמִתָּה	בְּנֵי יִם	בְּנֵי אָמִתָּה	בְּנֵי אָמִתָּה	בְּנֵי אָמִתָּה	בְּנֵי אָמִתָּה	אָמִתָּה	אָמִתָּה
the Lord	GOD	H518	neither sons	H518	nor daughters			
H136	H3069		H1121		H1323			
יְהִי לְךָ	לְבָדָם	בְּפָה	יְהִי לְךָ					
they only shall be delivered		H1992	H905	they only shall be delivered				
H5337				H5337				
בָּאָרֶץ	תְּהִרְאֵה	שְׁמַמְתָּה						
but the land	H1961	shall be desolate						
H776		H8077						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 19:29 (References God): And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

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