

Ezekiel 16:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirtest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

Analysis

They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirrest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. This devastating indictment reveals Jerusalem's unprecedented depravity. Normal prostitutes (*zonah*, זונה) receive payment; Jerusalem **reversed the transaction**, bribing nations to accept her advances. The Hebrew *shachad* (שׁחָד, "hirrest") means to bribe or offer inducements—Jerusalem paid tribute to Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon for political alliances that amounted to spiritual adultery.

"On every side" (מִמֶּנּוּבָבִים) indicates comprehensive unfaithfulness—Jerusalem prostituted herself to every available power. Historically, this refers to King Ahaz's tribute to Assyria (2 Kings 16:7-9), alliances with Egypt (Isaiah 30:1-7), and later appeals to Babylon. **Jerusalem spent her God-given wealth to purchase idolatrous relationships**, inverting the economic logic of prostitution and revealing desperation for validation from pagan powers.

The theological principle transcends historical Judah. When we use God's gifts (wealth, talents, influence) to purchase worldly approval or security apart from Him, we commit the same inversion. We bribe the world to accept us rather than resting in God's acceptance. This passage exposes the frantic, degrading nature of idolatry—it never satisfies but always demands more payment for diminishing returns.

Historical Context

From the divided monarchy onward, Judah pursued foreign alliances rather than trusting Yahweh. Isaiah condemned King Ahaz for sending temple treasury to Assyria (Isaiah 7:1-13, 2 Kings 16:7-9). Later kings sought Egyptian protection against Babylon (Jeremiah 37:5-10), draining national resources for unreliable allies.

Tribute payments documented in Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm massive wealth transfers. The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III depicts King Jehu bringing tribute. Judah literally paid to be dominated by foreign powers—economic and spiritual prostitution combined. This policy culminated in Jerusalem's destruction (586 BC), proving the bankruptcy of trusting nations over God.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. In what areas are you 'bribing' the world's acceptance by compromising convictions or spending resources?
2. How does Jerusalem's reversed prostitution illustrate the degrading, expensive nature of seeking identity apart from God?

Interlinear Text

לכל	תִּדְבֹּר יְה	את	נְתַת תְּ	וְאַתְּ נְתַת גַּדְהָ	זֶה וְתָ	לְכָל
H3605	to all whores	They give	gifts	H859	They give	H853
H2181		H5414	H5078		H5414	H5083

לְבָבְךָ יְהִי מְאֹבֵב יְהִי
אָוֶת מִתְשַׁחֵּד יְהִי
to all thy lovers and hir'est H853 them that they may come H413
H157 H7809 H935

מִטְבָּבָה	בְּתִזְנוּמִתִּיךְ
unto thee on every side	for thy whoredom
H5439	H8457

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 57:9 (Parallel theme): And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.

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