

Ezekiel 5:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.

Analysis

Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. Jerusalem's judgment would be visible to all—"waste" (le-chorbah, לְחֹרְבָה) means desolation, ruin, or rubble heap. The holy city would become "reproach" (cherpah, חֶרְפָּה)—an object of scorn, mockery, and derision. Nations witnessing God's judgment on His own people would use Jerusalem as proverbial example of divine wrath (Deuteronomy 29:24-28; 1 Kings 9:7-8). "In the sight of all that pass by" emphasizes maximum visibility and public shame.

This public humiliation reversed Israel's intended role. God positioned Jerusalem centrally to display His glory to nations (verse 5); instead, their sin made them display His judgment. The city meant to attract nations to worship Yahweh (Isaiah 2:2-3) became object lesson teaching the cost of covenant violation. Yet even this served God's purposes—through visible judgment, nations learned Yahweh's reality, holiness, and justice. Better to teach through judgment than be dismissed as powerless.

This principle applies broadly: Christians are epistles read by all (2 Corinthians 3:2). Our public witness matters enormously. Covenant unfaithfulness doesn't just harm us privately; it defames God's name among unbelievers (Romans 2:24). Conversely, faithful living 'in the sight of all' attracts others to God's glory

(Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12). Jerusalem's visible ruin warns that God takes His reputation seriously and judges those who profane His name.

Historical Context

Jerusalem's destruction produced exactly this international reaction. Lamentations records: "All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: 'Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?'" (Lamentations 2:15). Psalm 79:1-4 laments that nations mocked Judah's desolation.

Archaeological evidence confirms Jerusalem's devastation. Excavations reveal thick destruction layers from 586 BC with burnt debris, collapsed buildings, and artifacts left in place as residents fled or died. The city lay largely abandoned for decades, a visible testament to God's judgment. Travelers on major trade routes passing nearby would see the ruins and hear the story of covenant violation bringing divine wrath.

This 'reproach among nations' persisted through subsequent history—Babylon's exile became defining event in Jewish identity and theology. Even today, Jerusalem's multiple destructions (586 BC, 70 AD, 135 AD) serve as historical object lessons about the consequences of rejecting God's covenant and Messiah. The visible ruins taught generations about divine justice and the seriousness of sin.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jerusalem becoming a 'reproach' illustrate that sin brings public shame, not just private consequences?

2. What does the visibility of judgment teach about God's concern for His reputation among nations?
3. In what ways should awareness that we're 'seen by all who pass by' shape Christian living?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶתְנֶנָּה	לְחֶרֶץ הָ	וּלְחֶרֶץ הָ	בְּגוֹיִם	אֲשֶׁר
Moreover I will make	thee waste	and a reproach	among the nations	
H5414	H2723	H2781	H1471	H834
סְבִיבוֹתַי יִן	לְעֵינַי י	כָּל	עוֹבְרִים:	
that are round about	thee in the sight		of all that pass by	
H5439	H5869	H3605	H5674	

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 2:17 (Parallel theme): Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

Ezekiel 22:4 (Parallel theme): Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.