

Ezekiel 7:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

Analysis

And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. This verse announces God active judgment through pagan nations, a recurring theme in Ezekiel. What Israel defiled, God will give to foreign peoples for complete destruction and plunder.

I will give it emphasizes divine sovereignty. The temple destruction is not mere historical accident or Babylon superior military might—it is God deliberate act of judgment. Into the hands of the strangers refers to Gentile nations, those outside covenant relationship. For a prey and for a spoil are conquest vocabulary indicating total plundering. Everything of value will be taken.

The wicked of the earth describes the Babylonians from Israel perspective. Yet God uses the wicked as instruments of His righteous judgment—a profound theological reality appearing throughout Scripture (Habakkuk 1:5-11, Isaiah 10:5-15). God sovereignty extends even over pagan empires who unknowingly execute His purposes.

They shall pollute it completes the irony. Israel already polluted the temple with idols; now pagans will pollute it through destruction and desecration. From Reformed perspective, this demonstrates that when God people corrupt holy things, God may use unholy instruments to judge them. It also shows God is not

constrained by human expectations—He will not protect defiled religious institutions simply because they bear His name.

Historical Context

In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar forces thoroughly looted and destroyed the Jerusalem temple. 2 Kings 25:13-17 and Jeremiah 52:17-23 provide detailed inventory of temple treasures carried to Babylon: bronze pillars, bronze sea, basins, gold and silver vessels, and all temple furnishings.

Archaeological evidence from this destruction layer shows intense burning throughout Jerusalem, including the temple mount area. The Babylonians systematically dismantled valuable materials—bronze was broken up for transport, gold and silver melted down or carried off as plunder.

The term strangers would have been deeply offensive to Ezekiel audience. These uncircumcised Gentiles, ritually unclean according to Torah, would handle and destroy what was most sacred to Israel. Yet this is precisely the judgment God announced—sacred things given to profane hands.

Historically, this catastrophe transformed Jewish theology. Post-exilic Judaism became more flexible about worship without temple, developing synagogue system. Eventually this prepared for Christianity understanding that God presence is not limited to geographical locations but dwells in believers themselves (John 4:21-24, 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does God use of wicked nations for judgment reveal about His sovereignty?
2. How does this passage challenge assumptions that God will always protect religious institutions?
3. In what ways might God allow secular forces to judge corrupt churches today?
4. What does it mean that sacred things can become polluted and lose their sanctity?
5. How does Christ as the true temple provide what Solomon temple could not (John 2:19-21)?

Interlinear Text

עֲשֵׂה	הַכֹּת וְקִי	כִּי	הָאֶרֶץ	הַמְלֵאָה	מִשְׁפַּטִּים	יָמֵי
Make	a chain		for the land	is full	crimes	of bloody
H6213	H7569	H3588	H776	H4390	H4941	H1818
וְהָעִיר	הַמְלֵאָה	חֲמָס:				
and the city	is full	of violence				
H5892	H4390	H2555				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 27:2 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,

Ezekiel 9:9 (Blood): Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

Ezekiel 11:6 (Parallel theme): Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

Hosea 4:2 (Blood): By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

2 Kings 21:16 (Blood): Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

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