

Isaiah 21:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night:
if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

Analysis

'The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.' The enigmatic answer: both morning (relief) and night (continued suffering) come. This could mean: temporary relief followed by renewed judgment, or different fates for different groups, or the ambiguity of Edom's future depending on their response. The invitation 'if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come' suggests conditional hope—if Edom genuinely seeks God (not just information), they should return. True inquiry requires repentance ('return'—shuv, the Hebrew word for repent). This demonstrates that knowing the future isn't enough; relationship with God matters. Edom's future could change through genuine repentance. This reflects covenant theology: God's announced judgments can be averted through repentance (Jonah 3; Jeremiah 18:7-10). Yet the answer's ambiguity suggests Edom likely won't truly repent—questions remain rhetorical, not genuine seeking.

Historical Context

Edom's historical fate was sealed destruction (Obadiah; Ezekiel 35; Malachi 1:2-4). Despite the open invitation to return, Edom apparently didn't genuinely repent. This validates the prophetic principle: God offers mercy, but most reject it. The ambiguous prophecy ('morning...and night') allows for either outcome based on response, yet God knows which will actually occur. This demonstrates divine sovereignty and human responsibility coexisting: genuine offers that won't be accepted due to hardened hearts. Church history shows this pattern: the gospel

genuinely offered to all, yet most reject it. God's universal offers are sincere, yet He foreknows who will respond positively. This mystery—divine sovereignty and human responsibility—remains throughout Scripture, not fully reconciled in human categories but both affirmed as true.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does 'morning comes, and also night' teach about mixed futures or conditional outcomes?
2. How does the call to 'return' demonstrate that genuine inquiry requires repentance?
3. Why does God offer mercy that He foreknows will be rejected?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	לְלֹה	וְגַם	בְּקָרְבָּן	אַתִּי:	שָׁמְרָנִי	רְאֵמָרָנִי	רְאֵמָרָנִי	אָמַר
said	The watchman		come	The morning		H1571	and also the night	H518
H559	H8104		H857	H1242			H3915	

בְּאַתִּי:	שָׁבַע	בְּאַתִּי:	שָׁבַע	בְּאַתִּי:	שָׁבַע
enquire	enquire	ye return	come		
H1158	H1158	H7725	H857		