

Isaiah 33:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

Analysis

The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth (נִשְׁמָעוּ מְסִלּוֹת שָׁבֵת עַבְרָ אֶנְחָ, nashamu mesilot shavat over orach)—highways (מְסִלָּה, mesilah) are desolate (נִשְׁמָם, nasham), travelers (עַבְרָ, over orach) cease (שָׁבֵת, shavat). **He hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man** (הִפְרֵר בְּרִית מְאַס) (נִשְׁבַּב אָנוֹשׁ, hefer berit ma'as arim lo chashav enosh)—he broke (פִּרְרָ, parar) covenant (בְּרִית, berit), despised (מְאַס, ma'as) cities, doesn't regard (חִשְׁבַּב, chashav) mankind (אָנוֹשׁ, enosh).

Assyria's invasion devastated infrastructure—roads unsafe, travel impossible, commerce ceased. Sennacherib broke covenant (perhaps tribute agreements, 2 Kings 18:14-16) and despised cities (2 Kings 18:13 says he captured 46 fortified cities). He regarded no man—contempt for human life, treating people as expendable. This lawlessness characterizes tyrants who consider themselves above morality and treaties. Revelation 6:8 describes similar conditions: 'power was given unto them... to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death.'

Historical Context

Assyrian records boast of destruction—burning cities, deporting populations, making regions uninhabitable. Sennacherib's Taylor Prism brags about devastating Judean countryside and extracting tribute from Hezekiah. Archaeological evidence shows destruction layers in Judean cities from this period—Lachish, for example,

was brutally destroyed (reliefs from Nineveh depict the siege). The broken covenant may reference Sennacherib's rejection of Hezekiah's tribute as insufficient.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do modern tyrants similarly break covenants, despise cities, and disregard human life?
2. What does complete lawlessness—abandoned highways, no regard for humanity—reveal about life without God's restraining grace?
3. How should Christians respond when facing leaders who despise covenant and humanity?

Interlinear Text

lie	waste	The	highways	ceaseth	the	wayfaring	man	רָאשָׁה	רָאשָׁה	רָאשָׁה	רָאשָׁה
H8074		H4546		H7673		H5674		H734		H6565	

the	covenant	he	hath	despised	the	cities	לֹא	צָרָעָה	צָרָעָה	צָרָעָה	צָרָעָה
H1285		H3988			H5892		H3808		H2803		H376

Additional Cross-References

Judges 5:6 (Parallel theme): In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

Isaiah 35:8 (Parallel theme): And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

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