

Jeremiah 19:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

Analysis

The indictment specifies Judah's sin: "Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place." "Forsaken" (azav, אָזַב) means abandoned, left behind—covenant breach. "Estranged" (nakhar, נָכַר) means treated as foreign, profaned what should be holy. They've transformed God's city into alien territory through idolatry: "burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah."

The phrase "whom neither they nor their fathers have known" emphasizes these gods' foreignness—not inherited ancestral traditions but recently adopted apostasy. Contrast with knowing the true God through covenant relationship (Jer 31:34). The climactic charge: "have filled this place with the blood of innocents"—likely both innocent victims of injustice and children sacrificed to Molech. Innocent blood cries out for divine justice (Gen 4:10, Rev 6:10).

This verse illustrates how theological apostasy produces moral atrocity. False worship of non-existent gods leads to devaluing human life made in God's image. The Reformed tradition emphasizes that right theology produces right ethics—abandoning biblical truth inevitably generates moral chaos. Modern parallels include abortion, euthanasia, and other assaults on human dignity that follow from rejecting the Creator who gives humans inherent worth.

Historical Context

Child sacrifice to Molech (also called Moloch) was practiced by Canaanites and adopted by apostate Israelites (Lev 20:2-5, 2 Kgs 23:10, Jer 32:35). Archaeological evidence from Carthage and other Phoenician sites shows infant remains in tophet burial grounds, confirming ancient testimony about child sacrifice. Such practices represented absolute covenant violation, meriting the strongest divine judgment. Judah's adoption of these abominations demonstrated complete moral collapse.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does forsaking God lead inevitably to estranging holy places and practices?
2. What connection exists between false theology and moral atrocities like child sacrifice or abortion?
3. How does the doctrine that humans bear God's image provide the foundation for protecting innocent life?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר יָעָוּ H3282	עָזְבוּ נִי H834	בְּעַלְמָא H5800	וַיִּנָּכְרוּ וִי H5234	אֶת H853
הַמָּקוֹם H4725	וְהִזָּה H2088	וַיִּקְטְרוּ H6999	בּוֹ H0	אֱלֹהֵי יָם H430
לֹא H834	אֲשֶׁר H3808	יָדְעוּ וְ H1992	וְאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם H1	אֲחֵרֵי יָם H312
וּמַלְכֵי י H4428	יְהוּדָה H3063	וּמָלְאוּ וִ H4390	אֶת H853	הַמָּקוֹם H4725
וְנָקִים H5355	וְהִזָּה H2088	וְאֶת H853	וְאֶת H853	וְאֶת H853
וְנָקִים H5355	וְנָקִים H5355	וְנָקִים H5355	וְנָקִים H5355	וְנָקִים H5355

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:34 (Blood): Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

Isaiah 65:11 (Parallel theme): But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

Deuteronomy 28:20 (Parallel theme): The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

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.

Jeremiah 7:9 (References God): Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

Isaiah 59:7 (Blood): Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

Jeremiah 2:19 (References God): Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Jeremiah 2:13 (Parallel theme): For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jeremiah 17:13 (Parallel theme): O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

Jeremiah 11:13 (References God): For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.