

Jeremiah 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

Analysis

God continues describing Israel's former status: 'Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase.' The phrase 'holiness unto the LORD' (qodesh le-YHWH, קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה) indicates Israel was set apart, consecrated, dedicated for sacred purpose—belonging exclusively to God. This echoes Exodus 19:6 where Israel was called 'a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.' The term 'firstfruits' (reshit tevuato, רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתוֹ) carries theological weight—the first portion of harvest belonged to God, offered before consuming any yourself (Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy 26:1-11). Israel was God's 'firstfruit' among nations—His chosen people, consecrated to Him, prototype of His redemptive purpose. This status came with protection: 'all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.' To 'devour' Israel was to 'offend' (asham, אָשָׁם)—incur guilt requiring punishment. God defended His holy possession; those attacking Israel attacked God's property. 'Evil shall come upon them' refers to divine judgment on nations oppressing Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon eventually). This protection was conditional on covenant faithfulness—when Israel broke covenant, God removed protection and used enemies as judgment instruments.

Historical Context

Israel's 'firstfruits' status appears throughout Scripture. They were chosen not for superiority but for divine purpose—to be God's witness to nations (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Early in their history, God judged nations oppressing them: Egypt (plagues),

Amalekites (defeated), Canaanites (conquered). However, covenant unfaithfulness reversed this—God used Assyria to judge northern kingdom (722 BC), Babylon to judge Judah (586 BC), and Rome to destroy Jerusalem (70 AD). The New Testament applies 'firstfruits' language to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23) and the church (James 1:18, Revelation 14:4)—believers are now God's holy people, set apart for His purposes. The principle remains: God protects His people, but persistent covenant unfaithfulness brings discipline. Israel's loss of 'holiness' through idolatry meant losing the protection that status provided. This explains how God could use pagan nations to judge His own people—they forfeited their consecrated status through spiritual adultery.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's status as 'holiness unto the LORD' and 'firstfruits' shape understanding of their unique calling and responsibility among nations?
2. What does the conditional nature of divine protection (based on covenant faithfulness) teach about the relationship between obedience and blessing?

Interlinear Text

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|---------|-----------------|---------------------|----------|------------------|-----------------|
| כָּל | תְּבוּאָתָהּ | וְרֵאשֵׁי יֵת | יְהוָה: | יִשְׂרָאֵל | קִדְּשׁ |
| H3605 | of his increase | and the firstfruits | the LORD | Israel | was holiness |
| | H8393 | H7225 | H3068 | H3478 | H6944 |
| וְנָאָם | אֵלֵיהֶם | תָּבֹא | רָעָה | וְאִשָּׁמוֹ | אֲכָל יוֹ |
| H5002 | H413 | shall come | evil | him shall offend | all that devour |
| | | H935 | H7451 | H816 | H398 |
| | | | | | יְהוָה: |
| | | | | | the LORD |
| | | | | | H3068 |

Additional Cross-References

James 1:18 (Parallel theme): Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Revelation 14:4 (Parallel theme): These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Isaiah 41:11 (Parallel theme): Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

Jeremiah 50:7 (References Lord): All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

Deuteronomy 7:6 (Holy): For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

Jeremiah 12:14 (Evil): Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I

will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

Romans 11:16 (Holy): For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

Zechariah 2:8 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

Deuteronomy 14:2 (Holy): For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Numbers 18:12 (References Lord): All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.