

Jeremiah 22:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

Analysis

Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon—God uses striking metaphors of beauty and value. Gilead (גִּלְעָד) was famed for balm, fertility, and rich pastureland east of the Jordan. Lebanon (לְבָנָן) was renowned for majestic cedars, pristine mountain beauty, and cool streams. The phrase **head of Lebanon** (rosh haLevanon, רֹאשׁ הַלְּבָנָן) means its summit, the most glorious part. These images convey preciousness: the royal house was once treasured by God like fertile Gilead or magnificent Lebanon.

Yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited (im-lo ashitech midbar, arim lo noshevu, לא נושבו, אִם־לֹא אֲשִׁיכָּבֵר עָרִים לֹא נוֹשְׁבָו)—the reversal is devastating. Midbar (מִדְבָּר, 'wilderness') is barren wasteland, the opposite of Gilead's fertility. **Cities which are not inhabited** emphasizes complete abandonment—not just damaged but depopulated. The Hebrew lo noshevu (לא נושבו) means perpetually uninhabited. God will transform beauty into desolation, precisely because covenant privilege was abused. The 'yet surely' (im-lo) is an emphatic oath formula, reinforcing verse 5's sworn judgment. Greater privilege brings greater accountability (Luke 12:48).

Historical Context

Gilead and Lebanon were geographical landmarks with rich theological significance. Gilead was Israelite territory known for balm (Jeremiah 8:22, 46:11),

pastures (Micah 7:14), and rugged beauty (Song of Solomon 4:1). Lebanon's cedars were used in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 5:6-10) and symbolized strength and majesty (Psalm 92:12). By comparing the royal house to these treasured regions, God emphasizes how much He valued the Davidic line—and how shocking its coming desolation would be. The prophecy fulfilled precisely: Jerusalem and the royal palace became literal ruins in 586 BC. Archaeologists have found evidence of Babylonian destruction throughout Jerusalem's ancient city. The imagery also appears in reverse in restoration prophecy: Isaiah 35:1-2 promises that wilderness will become like Lebanon when God restores His people. The pattern teaches that God's valuation determines destiny: what He treasures flourishes, what He curses withers.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's use of beautiful imagery (Gilead, Lebanon) reveal about His original design and valuation of the Davidic house?
2. How does the transformation from 'head of Lebanon' to 'wilderness' illustrate the principle that covenant privilege intensifies the severity of judgment for disobedience?
3. What does this verse teach about the conditional nature of blessing: that God's past favor does not guarantee future preservation apart from ongoing obedience?

Interlinear Text

ל א אמ לפָלָבָן וְרַאשׁ הַלְּבָנָן לְאַתָּה גַּלְעָד

Thou art Gilead H859 H0 unto me and the head of Lebanon H518 H3808

H1568 H7218 H3844

וְשָׁבָה לְאָשִׁיתָב מִדְבָּר עַר יָם וְאֶשְׁתַּבְנֵה כִּי תְּהִלֵּן כִּי תְּהִלֵּן
which are not inhabited and cities a wilderness thee surely I will make

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 6:11 (References Lord): Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

Psalms 107:34 (Parallel theme): A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

Isaiah 27:10 (Parallel theme): Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

Micah 3:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Jeremiah 26:18 (Kingdom): Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

Jeremiah 7:34 (Parallel theme): Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of

gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Jeremiah 9:11 (Parallel theme): And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

Genesis 37:25 (Parallel theme): And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

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