

Jeremiah 22:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Analysis

Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God—the response identifies covenant abandonment as the cause. The verb azav (אָזַב, 'forsaken') means to completely abandon or desert, used of Israel's apostasy throughout Scripture (Judges 2:12-13, 1 Kings 9:9). **The covenant** (berit, בְּרִית) is Israel's fundamental relationship with YHWH, established at Sinai and renewed under David. Breaking berit violated the nation's constitutional foundation, not merely religious rules. The phrase **the LORD their God** (YHWH eloheihem, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) emphasizes relationship: He was 'their God'—they had unique covenant intimacy, which made their betrayal more grievous.

And worshipped other gods, and served them—this specifies the covenant breach. Vayishtachavu (וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, 'worshipped') means to bow down in homage, and vaya'avdum (וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ, 'served') means to render religious service or labor. Both terms appear in the Ten Commandments' prohibition (Exodus 20:5). The progression—forsaking covenant, then worshiping other gods—shows that idolatry is the inevitable result of abandoning YHWH. This fulfills Moses's warning in Deuteronomy 29:25-26: future generations will say, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant...and went and served other gods.' The answer is so obvious even pagans can articulate it: visible judgment reveals invisible apostasy.

Historical Context

This verse provides the theological interpretation of 586 BC: Jerusalem fell because of covenant unfaithfulness, specifically idolatry. Judah's syncretism was well-documented: Manasseh built altars to pagan gods in the temple itself (2 Kings 21:4-7), Josiah's reform discovered widespread Baal and Asherah worship (2 Kings 23:4-14), and even after reform, the people continued secret idolatry (Ezekiel 8:7-12). The covenant (*berit*) required exclusive loyalty to YHWH (Exodus 20:3-5), but Judah violated this systematically. The prophets repeatedly identified idolatry as the core sin bringing exile (Jeremiah 7:9, 11:10, Ezekiel 6:4-6). Deuteronomy's covenant curses (28:15-68) promised exactly this outcome: exile for idolatry. The fulfillment vindicated prophetic warnings and established a pattern: covenant blessing requires covenant fidelity. The early church applied this principle: spiritual apostasy brings judgment (Hebrews 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:20-21). Even unbelievers could discern the cause-effect relationship between idolatry and destruction.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the progression from 'forsaken the covenant' to 'worshipped other gods' teach about how abandoning God inevitably leads to serving false gods?
2. How does this verse demonstrate that the covenant (*berit*) was not merely religious preference but the constitutional foundation of Israel's existence as a nation?
3. What does the clarity of this answer—even to pagans—reveal about how visible judgment makes invisible spiritual apostasy undeniable?

Interlinear Text

וְאָמְרוּ	אֲשֶׁר עָלָה	עָזְבוּ וְ	אֶת		
Then they shall answer	H5921	H834	Because they have forsaken	H853	
H559			H5800		
בְּרִית יִת	יְהוָה ה	לֵאלֹהֵי יִם	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ ו	לֵאלֹהֵי יִם	אֲחֵרֵי יִם
the covenant	of the LORD	gods	and worshipped	gods	other
H1285	H3068	H430	H7812	H430	H312
וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ:					
and served					
H5647					

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 22:17 (References God): Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

2 Chronicles 34:25 (References God): Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.