

Jeremiah 23:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

Analysis

For both prophet and priest are profane—chaneph (חַנֵּף) means polluted, godless, or hypocritical. Not just laypeople but those consecrated to sacred office had become defiled. This indicts the entire religious establishment. **Yea, in my house have I found their wickedness**—God personally discovered (matsa, אָשָׁף) their ra'ah (רָעָה, evil, wickedness) within the temple itself. This echoes Ezekiel 8, where God showed the prophet abominations committed inside the sanctuary: women weeping for Tammuz, men worshiping the sun, and idols in the inner courts.

Saith the LORD (ne'um YHWH, נְאֻם־יְהָוָה)—the prophetic formula emphasizing divine authority—makes clear this isn't Jeremiah's opinion but God's verdict. The verse devastates any notion that maintaining temple rituals while tolerating wickedness satisfies covenant obligations. Jesus similarly cleansed the temple (Matthew 21:12-13) and pronounced woes on scribes and Pharisees who appeared righteous outwardly while inwardly full of hypocrisy (Matthew 23:27-28). God's presence in His house doesn't automatically sanctify worshipers—it intensifies accountability for those who defile what is holy.

Historical Context

The Jerusalem temple, built by Solomon (950 BC) and renovated by Josiah (622 BC), was central to Judean identity. Prophets and priests served there daily, maintaining sacrifices and teaching Torah. Yet Jeremiah and Ezekiel reveal that

these very officials practiced idolatry within the sanctuary. This wasn't casual sin but deliberate syncretism—blending Yahweh worship with Canaanite fertility cults, Babylonian astrology, and Egyptian deities. Archaeological discoveries of fertility figurines and incense altars at Israelite sites confirm widespread syncretistic worship. The prophets' and priests' profanity was especially grievous because they knew better—they had access to Scripture, conducted sacred rituals, and taught the people. Their corruption made true worship impossible and guaranteed covenant judgment.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does God's discovery of wickedness 'in my house' teach about the insufficiency of external religious observance?
2. How does the pollution of prophets and priests (those meant to be holy) intensify rather than diminish their accountability?
3. In what ways might church leaders today be 'profane' while maintaining orthodox appearance?

Interlinear Text

מֵצָא אֲתִי	רְעֵתָם	נָאֵם	יְהוָה:
have I found	their wickedness	saith	the LORD

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 6:13 (Prophecy): For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

Zephaniah 3:4 (Prophecy): Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

Jeremiah 32:34 (Parallel theme): But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it.

Ezekiel 23:39 (Parallel theme): For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

Jeremiah 11:15 (Evil): What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

Jeremiah 8:10 (Prophecy): Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

Jeremiah 7:30 (Evil): For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

Ezekiel 8:16 (References Lord): And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

2 Chronicles 36:14 (References Lord): Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.