

Jeremiah 23:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

Analysis

I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing—sha'arurah (שְׁעִירוּרָה) means something horrifying, appalling, or causing one's hair to stand on end. What follows justifies this extreme language: **they commit adultery, and walk in lies**—both literal sexual immorality (na'aph, נָאֵף) and spiritual unfaithfulness, combined with habitual deception (sheker, שֶׁקֶר). **They strengthen also the hands of evildoers**—chazaq yad (חֲזַקוּ יָדַי) means to make firm or encourage. By not calling sin to account, they enable wickedness. **That none doth return from his wickedness**—shuv (שׁוּב), the standard word for repentance (turning back), doesn't occur because false prophets remove motivation to change.

They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah—the comparison to Genesis 19's paradigmatic wicked cities is devastating. God doesn't see Jerusalem as His holy city but as morally equivalent to the cities He destroyed with fire. This anticipates Jesus's warning that it will be more tolerable for Sodom in judgment than for cities that reject Him (Matthew 10:15). The verse reveals how false prophets function: their moral compromise and false assurances prevent the repentance that could avert judgment.

Historical Context

Jerusalem, David's city and site of Solomon's temple, considered itself immune to judgment due to God's covenant promises (Jeremiah 7:4: 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!'). Yet by Jeremiah's time (605-586 BC), the city's prophets practiced the very sins that destroyed Sodom: pride, complacency, neglect of the poor (Ezekiel 16:49), and sexual immorality. Archaeological evidence from this period shows widespread syncretistic worship and cultic prostitution. The prophets who should have called the city to repentance instead participated in and legitimized wickedness. Their 'strengthening the hands of evildoers' meant that righteous judgment from God became necessary because internal moral correction was impossible. Within a generation, Jerusalem experienced destruction that made Sodom's judgment look mild (Lamentations 4:6).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do false teachers 'strengthen the hands of evildoers' by removing the motivation for repentance?
2. What does Jerusalem's comparison to Sodom teach about the insufficiency of religious heritage without moral transformation?
3. In what ways might churches today be morally equivalent to 'Sodom and Gomorrah' despite orthodox appearance?

Interlinear Text

וּבְנֵי י	יְרוּשָׁלַם	כֹּא יֵתִי	שֶׁעֲרוּךְ ה	
also in the prophets	of Jerusalem	I have seen	an horrible thing	
H5030	H3389	H7200	H8186	
נָא וּף	וְהֵלֵךְ	בַּשֵּׁ קֶר	וְחִזְקוּ	יָדֵי
they commit adultery	and walk	in lies	they strengthen	also the hands
H5003	H1980	H8267	H2388	H3027
מַרְעֵ ים	לִבִּ לְתִי	שׁ בּו	אִישׁ	מִכַּעַת ו
of evildoers		doth return	that none	from his wickedness
H7489	H1115	H7725	H376	H7451
				H1961 H0
כָּלֵם	כֹּסֶד־ם	וְיֹשְׁבֵי יָה		
H3605	they are all of them unto me as Sodom	and the inhabitants		
	H5467	H3427		
כַּעֲמֹרָה:				
thereof as Gomorrah				
H6017				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 29:23 (Parallel theme): Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

Ezekiel 22:25 (Prophecy): There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

Jeremiah 23:32 (Prophecy): Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 14:14 (Prophecy): Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Genesis 18:20 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

Deuteronomy 32:32 (Parallel theme): For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:

Micah 3:11 (Prophecy): The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

Jeremiah 20:16 (Parallel theme): And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

Matthew 11:24 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Genesis 13:13 (Evil): But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.