

Jeremiah 23:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

Analysis

They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace—the Hebrew נִאֱמְרִים (no'mrim, 'they keep saying') indicates continual, repetitive proclamation. To those who **despise me** (מַנְאָצֵי, m'na'atsai—active scorners of Yahweh), the false prophets promise שָׁלוֹם (shalom, 'peace/wholeness/prosperity'). **And they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.** The phrase לְבָוֹת (sh'rirut libbo, 'stubbornness/imagination of his heart') describes willful rebellion disguised as independence.

The false prophets commit theological malpractice: promising covenant blessings to covenant breakers. They divorce blessing from obedience, creating a prosperity gospel disconnected from holiness. Jesus warned against false prophets who cry 'Lord, Lord' yet practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23). The modern equivalent says 'God loves you' while ignoring repentance, cheap grace without discipleship. Authentic prophets comfort the afflicted but afflict the comfortable—false prophets reverse this.

Historical Context

This was a perennial problem in Israel—prophets declaring 'Peace, peace' when no peace existed (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). During 609-586 BC, as Babylon's threat grew, Judah's court prophets insisted God would never allow Jerusalem's destruction because of the temple's presence. They reinterpreted covenant promises to guarantee security regardless of faithfulness, a deadly theological error.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What false peace are you proclaiming to yourself while walking in stubbornness?
2. How does contemporary Christianity sometimes promise blessing without obedience?
3. What would it mean for you to hear God's authentic word rather than comfortable lies?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי הָדָבָר אָמָר וְאָמָר וְלֹמַנְאָצֵץ
They say They say unto them that despise hath said me The LORD
H559 H559 H5006 H1696 H3068

הַלְלוּ שָׁלֹום יְהִי הַלְלוּ שָׁלֹום
Ye shall have peace unto every one that walketh
H7965 H1961 H0 H3605 H1980

עַלְיכֶם תִּבְרֹא וְתִבְרֹא לְבָבְךָ וְאַל אָמָר וְתִבְרֹא
after the imagination of his own heart They say shall come
H8307 H3820 H559 H3808 H935 H5921

רָעָה:

No evil
H7451

Additional Cross-References

Micah 3:11 (Evil): 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 13:10 (Evil): This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

Amos 9:10 (Evil): All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

Jeremiah 5:12 (Evil): They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

Jeremiah 8:11 (Peace): For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

Jeremiah 9:14 (Parallel theme): But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

Deuteronomy 29:19 (Peace): And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

Micah 3:5 (Peace): Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

Jeremiah 3:17 (Evil): At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Parallel theme): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

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