

Jeremiah 23:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

Analysis

God directly addresses the shepherds, contrasting their actions with His own. 'Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them'—three accusations emphasizing their negligence and destructive leadership. The phrase 'my flock' asserts divine ownership; these leaders were stewards, not owners. Their failure to 'visit' (care for) the flock contrasts sharply with God's promise: 'behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings.'

This verse establishes the principle of divine retribution—leaders will experience judgment proportionate to their unfaithfulness. The same word translated 'visit' appears twice but with opposite meanings: they did not visit (attend to) the flock, so God will visit (judge) them. This wordplay in Hebrew emphasizes the precise justice of God's response. Those who scattered will themselves be scattered; those who drove away will be driven away.

The theological foundation here is that God holds leaders accountable not merely for what they do but for what they fail to do. Sins of omission are as serious as sins of commission. James 3:1 warns, 'My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.' Church history confirms this principle—corrupt shepherds face God's severe judgment while faithful shepherds receive a crown of glory (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Historical Context

The historical fulfillment of this judgment came swiftly. King Zedekiah was captured fleeing Jerusalem, forced to watch his sons executed, then blinded and taken to Babylon where he died in prison (39:4-7; 52:9-11). Many of the political and religious leaders who opposed Jeremiah died during Jerusalem's siege or were executed afterward. Those who survived were exiled to Babylon, experiencing the very scattering they had inflicted on God's flock through their oppression and false guidance.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to judge unfaithful shepherds comfort those who have suffered under corrupt leadership?
2. What specific responsibilities do spiritual leaders bear for those entrusted to their care?
3. In what ways might we be guilty of sins of omission—failing to care for those God has placed in our sphere of influence?

Interlinear Text

צְלָל יִשְׁבָּא לְאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱמֹר כִּי
H3651 H3541 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel H5921

בְּרַע יִם בְּרַע יִם אֶת עַמִּי אֶת מִן הַפְּצַת
against the pastors against the pastors my people Ye have scattered
H7462 H7462 H5971 H859 H6327

אֶת צָאַנְיָה וְתַדְחַת יִמְלָא אֶל פְּקַד תְּמִימָה אֶת
my flock and driven them away and have not visited H3808 H6485 H853 H2005

אֶת פְּקַד פְּקַד רְשָׁעָה מַעְלִילִיכָּם נָאָם
and have not visited upon you the evil of your doings saith
H6485 H5921 H853 H7455 H4611 H5002

יְהוָה:
the LORD
H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 21:12 (Evil): O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Exodus 32:34 (Parallel theme): Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

Micah 7:4 (Parallel theme): The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

Jeremiah 23:34 (References Lord): And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

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