

Jeremiah 25:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

The phrase *bā'îr 'ăsher-niqrā' šēmî 'āleyhā* (בָּאֵיר אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עַלְּהָ), the city which is called by my name) refers to Jerusalem, the temple city bearing Yahweh's name. The logic is compelling: if God judges His own covenant city and people, how can pagan nations expect exemption? The rhetorical question *wě'attem hinnāqēh tinnāqû* (וְאַתֶּם הִנְּקָה תִּנְּקֻ, and should you be utterly unpunished?) expects a negative answer.

The emphatic denial *lō' tinnāqû* (לוֹ תִּנְּקַע, you shall not be unpunished) reinforces certainty. Peter echoes this principle: 'judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?' (1 Peter 4:17). Greater privilege brings greater accountability. If covenant people face judgment for unfaithfulness, how much more those who never acknowledged the true God? Yet the reverse is also true—if God judges His own people to purify and restore them, there is hope for gentiles who repent (Romans 11:11-32).

Historical Context

This argument would resonate powerfully with ancient Near Eastern peoples. Jerusalem was famous as the city of the great God Yahweh, housing the magnificent temple. If even this privileged city faced destruction, no city was safe. The logic was inescapable. When Jerusalem fell (586 BC), surrounding nations recognized this as divine judgment, not merely military defeat (Lamentations 2:15-16). The theological implications were clear: if Yahweh judged His own people, all nations stood accountable before Him.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the principle 'judgment begins with God's people' challenge the assumption that church membership or religious heritage guarantees security?
2. What does God's judgment of Jerusalem teach about the relationship between privilege and accountability?
3. If God judges those who know Him for unfaithfulness, what does this imply about the certainty of judgment for those who have never acknowledged Him?

Interlinear Text

אָנֹכִי שְׁמִי עַל יְהֹוָה כִּי
H3588 H2009 on the city H834 for I will call H7121 by my name H5921 H595
H5892 H859 H7121 H8034

מֵת לְפָנֶיךָ מֵת אַתָּה
For lo I begin to bring evil H859 Ye shall not be unpunished H5352
H2490 H7489 H5352

מֵת לְפָנֶיךָ מֵת אַתָּה מֵת כִּי
Ye shall not be unpunished H3808 Ye shall not be unpunished H3588 for a sword H2719
H5352 H5352 H5352 H2719

מֵת כָּל עַל קְרָא אָנֹכִי
H589 for I will call H5921 H3605 upon all the inhabitants H3427 H776 saith H5002
H7121

אָנֹכִי קָרְבָּן כָּל אָדָם
the LORD of hosts H3068 H6635

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:31 (Evil): Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Ezekiel 38:21 (Word): And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

1 Peter 4:17 (Parallel theme): For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

1 Kings 8:43 (Parallel theme): Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.

Jeremiah 49:12 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it.

Ezekiel 9:6 (Parallel theme): Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

Obadiah 1:16 (Parallel theme): For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

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