

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 'āsher-niqrā' šēmî 'āleyhā* (בְּעִיר אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלֶיהָ), 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 הַנִּזְקָה תִּנָּקוּ, and should you be utterly unpunished?) expects a negative answer.

The emphatic denial *lō' tinnāqû* (לֹא תִנָּקוּ, 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

אֲנֹכִי	עַל יְהוָה	שְׁמִי	קִרְא	אֲשֶׁר	בְּעִיר	הַנִּה	כִּי
H595	H5921	H8034	H7121	H834	H5892	H2009	H3588
		by my name	for I will call		on the city		
תִּנָּק וְ	וְאֵת מִי	לְהָבִיעַ	מִי לְ				
H5352	H859	H7489	H2490				
Ye shall not be unpunished		to bring evil	For lo I begin				
וְתִנָּק וְ	לֹא	וְתִנָּק וְ	כִּי	וְ	וְ	וְ	וְ
H5352	H3808	H5352	H3588	H2719			
Ye shall not be unpunished		Ye shall not be unpunished	for a sword				
נֶאֱמַר	הָאֵרֶץ	יֹשְׁבֵי	כָּל	עַל	קִרְא	אֲנִי	י
H5002	H776	H3427	H3605	H5921	H7121	H589	
saith	of the earth	upon all the inhabitants		for I will call			
צְבָאוֹת:	יְהוָה						
H6635	H3068						
of hosts	the LORD						

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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