

Jeremiah 29:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Because they have committed villany in Israel—The Hebrew נְבָלָה (nevalah, villany) is a strong term denoting disgraceful, senseless evil—the same word for Shechem's rape of Dinah (Gen 34:7) and Achan's theft (Josh 7:15). It implies covenant-breaking that defiles the entire community.

And have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name—Sexual immorality and false prophecy are paired, revealing the connection between personal sin and public deception. The Hebrew נָאָف (na'af, adultery) and דְּבָר שְׁקָר (davar sheqer, lying words) form a double indictment. Men who violate covenant in private (marriage) will violate covenant in public (prophecy). Jeremiah exposes what the community might not have known: **even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD**—God sees both bedroom and pulpit, and judges hypocrisy in both.

Historical Context

False prophets in Jeremiah's era often lived immorally (23:14), unlike true prophets who stood in God's counsel (23:18, 22). The connection between sexual sin and false teaching appears throughout Scripture (2 Pet 2:14, Jude 4, Rev 2:20).

Character and doctrine cannot be separated; corruption in one area breeds corruption in the other.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Why are sexual immorality and false teaching so often linked in Scripture?
What's the common root?
2. How does private sin disqualify public ministry? What does 'even I know' reveal about God's standards?
3. What safeguards protect leaders from the dual snares of sexual sin and doctrinal compromise?

Interlinear Text

וְיִתְאַגְּוִי בַּיִשְׁרָאֵל נְבָל הַיּוֹנָאָדָלְתָה
H3282 H834 Because they have committed villany in Israel adultery
H6213 H5039 H3478 H5003

שְׁאֵר בְּשָׁמֵי דְּבָר יְדִיבָר וְנִשְׁיָה מְגַעֵּי מִזְבֵּחַ אֶת
H854 H802 wives with their neighbours and have spoken words in my name lying
H7453 H1696 H1697 H8034 H8267

לְזַאת אֲשֶׁר צוֹת מְלֵאָה יְאַנְכָּה וְפִיְדָעָה
H834 H3808 which I have not commanded H6680 H595 H3045
them even I know

וְיִעַד נָאָם יְהִי
and am a witness saith the LORD
H5707 H5002 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 23:14 (Parallel theme): 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.

Malachi 3:5 (Witness): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Hebrews 4:13 (Parallel theme): Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Proverbs 5:21 (References Lord): For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

Jeremiah 16:17 (Parallel theme): For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

Jeremiah 29:21 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;
