

Jeremiah 5:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit:
therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

Analysis

The exploitation intensifies: 'As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit' (kěkeluḅ mālē' ôp kēn bāttêhem mēlē'im mirmâ, כְּכִלּוּב מְלֵא עוֹף בְּתֵיָהֶם, מְלֵאִים מִרְמָה). The simile compares wealthy homes to bird cages crammed with trapped fowl—their prosperity derives from 'deceit' (mirmâ), meaning fraud, treachery, betrayal of trust. 'Therefore they are become great, and waxen rich' ('al-kēn gādēlû wayya'āšîrû) shows cause and effect: wealth accumulation through injustice. The verbs gādal (become great) and 'āšar (become rich) indicate impressive external success—but built on exploitation. This condemns prosperity gained through unethical means. The New Testament echoes this: James 5:1-6 warns the rich who defraud laborers, and Jesus taught that treasures gained unjustly won't last (Luke 12:15-21, 16:19-31).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern economies were predominantly agrarian with limited social mobility. Wealth concentration occurred through land acquisition via debt foreclosure, exploitative lending practices, and manipulation of legal systems. The wealthy class in Jerusalem—royal officials, priests, merchants—lived in luxury while rural populations struggled. Jeremiah 22:13-17 specifically condemns King Jehoiakim for building his palace with forced labor and unpaid wages. The 'deceit' included false weights and measures (Amos 8:5), bribery in courts (Micah 7:3), and economic oppression. Such injustice violated covenant stipulations and provoked

divine judgment. The exile would redistribute wealth and humble the proud, fulfilling prophetic warnings that ill-gotten gain wouldn't endure.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you evaluate your own financial success—is it built on integrity and justice or questionable practices?
2. What does biblical justice require regarding wealth disparity between Christians and vulnerable populations?

Interlinear Text

כְּכֶלֶבֶת	מָלֵא יָם	עֹף	יָן	בְּתֵיָּהֶם	מָלֵא יָם	מִרְמֵה
As a cage	full	of birds	H3651	so are their houses	full	of deceit
H3619	H4392	H5775		H1004	H4392	H4820
עַל	יָן	גָּדֹל וְ		וְעֹשִׁירֵי:		
H5921	H3651	therefore they are become great	H1431	and waxen rich	H6238	

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