

Luke 20:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Analysis

Which devour widows' houses (οἵ κατεσθίουσιν τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν, hoi katesthiousin tas oikias tōn chērōn)—Katesthiō (to eat up, devour, consume) is violent, predatory language. These religious leaders devour (present tense: habitual action) the oikias (houses, households, estates) of chērōn (widows)—society's most vulnerable (Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 24:17, Isaiah 1:17). Methods likely included accepting donations from poor widows (Mark 12:41-44's context), exploiting legal authority as estate executors, or manipulating piety for financial gain.

And for a shew make long prayers (καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσεύχονται, kai prophasei makra proseuchontai)—Prophasis (pretext, pretense, outward show) reveals their prayers are performance, not communion. Makra (long, lengthy) describes duration used to impress. Proseuchomai (to pray) in present tense shows habitual practice. Jesus denounced long prayers elsewhere (Matthew 6:5-7), contrasting genuine heart-petition with verbose religious display. **The same shall receive greater damnation** (οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα, houtoi lēmpsontai perissoton krima)—future middle lēmpsontai (they will receive) guarantees coming judgment. Perissoteron (greater, more abundant) indicates intensified krima (judgment, condemnation). Greater privilege brings greater accountability (James 3:1).

Historical Context

Widows lacked male protection and were economically vulnerable. Religious leaders who should have defended them instead exploited them—a violation of Torah's core ethics. The following story of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4) illustrates this exploitation: she gives her last coins while wealthy leaders prosper. Within a generation, Jerusalem and temple would be destroyed—partial fulfillment of coming judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does religious leadership that exploits the vulnerable betray the very God it claims to serve?
2. What does 'greater damnation' for religious hypocrites teach about accountability proportional to privilege and knowledge?
3. Where might modern ministries be 'devouring widows' houses' through manipulative fundraising or exploitation of the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

οἵ	κατεσθίουσιν	τὰς	οἰκίας	τῶν	χηρῶν	καὶ	προφάσει
Which	devour					and	for a shew
G3739	G2719	G3588	G3614	G3588	G5503	G2532	G4392
μακρὰ	προσεύχονται·	οὗτοι	λήψονται	περισσότερον			
long	make	the same	shall receive				G4053
G3117	G4336	G3778	G2983				
κρίμα							
damnation							
							G2917

Additional Cross-References

Mark 12:40 (Prayer): Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

James 3:1 (Parallel theme): My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Luke 12:1 (Parallel theme): In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Titus 1:16 (Parallel theme): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Isaiah 10:2 (Parallel theme): To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

Matthew 23:13 (Parallel theme): But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Amos 2:7 (Parallel theme): That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

Ezekiel 33:31 (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Micah 3:2 (Parallel theme): Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

Micah 2:8 (Parallel theme): Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

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