

Micah 3:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

Analysis

They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. This verse delivers a devastating indictment in concise, powerful language. **בָּנָה צִיּוֹן בְּדָמִים** (boneh Tsiyon be-damim, "building Zion with blood") exposes how Jerusalem's expansion and beautification came through violence and exploitation. **דָמִים** (damim, "blood") is plural, emphasizing multiple instances of bloodshed—not one crime but systemic violence. **וַיַּרְשְׁלָם בָּעֲוָלָה** (vi-Yerushalayim be-avlah, "and Jerusalem with iniquity"). **עֲוָלָה** (avlah) means iniquity, injustice, or unrighteousness.

The irony is profound: Zion, God's holy mountain, built through blood; Jerusalem, the city of peace (shalem means peace/wholeness), constructed through injustice. The magnificent buildings, impressive fortifications, and beautiful temples rose through oppression—forced labor, confiscated property, unjust taxation, corrupt courts. The city's physical grandeur masked moral rot. External religious splendor concealed internal spiritual corruption.

This parallels Jesus's later condemnation of Jerusalem's religious establishment: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). Beautiful exteriors built on bloodshed and injustice provoke divine judgment. God values righteousness over religious architecture, justice over ceremonial grandeur. Babylon would later demolish Jerusalem's blood-stained buildings (2 Kings 25:9-10), demonstrating that structures built through injustice cannot stand.

Historical Context

During Micah's ministry (740-700 BC), Jerusalem expanded significantly. Archaeological evidence shows substantial building projects during this period—Hezekiah's tunnel, new fortifications, expansion of the city's residential areas. The influx of refugees from the northern kingdom after Assyria's conquest (722 BC) accelerated growth. But this development came at tremendous cost to the poor. Wealthy landowners seized property (Micah 2:1-2), courts perverted justice (3:9-11), and forced labor likely built public works. The temple stood magnificently, but it was financed through oppression. A century later, Habakkuk pronounced similar judgment on Babylon: "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!" (Habakkuk 2:12). The principle is universal: civilizations built on exploitation face divine destruction.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can religious institutions or cities appear outwardly impressive while being inwardly corrupt and bloodstained?
2. What does it mean to 'build with blood and iniquity'—how do modern societies replicate this pattern?
3. How should Christians evaluate whether our churches, cities, or nations are built on justice or exploitation?

Interlinear Text

בְּעִזּוֹלָה: יְהוָשָׁלָל מִצְּבָאָה בְּצָדְקָה יְמִינָה בְּבָנָה הַבְּנִים
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