

Psalm 33:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

Analysis

The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. David contrasts human planning with divine sovereignty—God frustrates nations' schemes and nullifies peoples' devices. This establishes that no human counsel succeeds against God's purposes, providing both warning and comfort.

The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought (Hebrew parar—break, frustrate, make void; 'etsah—counsel, advice, plan; goyim—nations, gentiles) declares God's ability to thwart even carefully planned schemes. Heathen/nations' counsel represents collective human wisdom organized against God's purposes. History repeatedly demonstrates this—powerful nations plot, devise strategies, mobilize resources, yet God easily frustrates their plans. Psalm 2 develops this theme: kings take counsel together against LORD and His Anointed, but He laughs at them from heaven.

He maketh the devices of the people of none effect (Hebrew nu'—hinder, frustrate; machashaboth—thoughts, plans, devices) intensifies the parallelism. Devices (machashaboth from root chashab—think, plan, devise) suggests intentional, calculated schemes. God doesn't merely oppose spontaneous evil but deliberately planned wickedness. None effect means complete nullification—not partial hindrance but total frustration. What humans carefully devise, God completely undoes.

This verse addresses theodicy and divine providence. Evil exists and humans scheme wickedly, yet God remains sovereign. He doesn't prevent all evil attempts but ensures they don't ultimately succeed against His purposes. Joseph's testimony illustrates this: his brothers meant evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Human devices may temporarily succeed, causing real suffering, but ultimately God's counsel stands. Reformed theology calls this God's decree—His eternal purpose that cannot be thwarted by creature's will. This provides believers comfort: though enemies plot and persecutions arise, God's purposes for His people cannot fail.

Historical Context

Biblical history repeatedly illustrates this truth. Pharaoh's counsel to enslave Israel was brought to nought—Israel increased anyway. Egyptian devices to drown Hebrew boys failed—Moses survived to deliver Israel. Haman's elaborate plot to destroy Jews was nullified—Jews were saved, Haman hanged. Sanhedrin's counsel to execute Jesus and suppress His movement seemed successful, but God raised Jesus and spread gospel worldwide. Every human attempt to frustrate God's purposes backfires.

Proverbs 19:21 summarizes: Many devices in man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of LORD, that shall stand. Proverbs 21:30 declares: There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. This doesn't mean human planning is futile in general but that plans opposing God's purposes cannot succeed. Godly planning succeeds; ungodly plotting fails. This guards against both presumption (thinking we can thwart God) and paralysis (thinking planning is useless).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does knowing that God brings heathen counsel to nought comfort you when facing opposition or persecution?
2. What is difference between saying God frustrates evil plans versus saying He prevents all evil attempts?
3. How does God's sovereignty over human devices relate to His meticulous providence in your personal circumstances?
4. In what historical or personal examples have you seen God nullify seemingly successful evil schemes?
5. How should believers balance making plans while trusting that ultimately God's counsel stands?

Interlinear Text

מְחַשֵּׁב וֹתֶן בְּנֵי אֹיָב
The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen he maketh the devices

H3068

H6331

H6098

H1471

H5106

H4284

עָמִים:

of the people

H5971

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 21:11 (Parallel theme): For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Isaiah 44:25 (Parallel theme): That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

Proverbs 21:30 (References Lord): There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

2 Samuel 15:31 (References Lord): And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

Psalms 140:8 (References Lord): Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah.

Psalms 9:15 (Parallel theme): The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

2 Samuel 17:23 (Parallel theme): And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Isaiah 19:3 (Parallel theme): And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.

Isaiah 44:23 (References Lord): Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

2 Samuel 17:14 (References Lord): And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.