

Psalm 69:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.

Analysis

Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. This imprecation prays for complete destruction of enemies' dwelling places and extinction of their households. "Habitation" (תְּרוּמָה/tiratam) can mean palace, encampment, or dwelling—the place of safety and family life. "Desolate" (שְׁמָמָה/shemah) indicates utter ruin, abandonment, the opposite of flourishing community. "Let none dwell in their tents" prays for total abandonment—no survivors, no inheritors, complete annihilation of the family line.

In ancient Near Eastern culture, this was the ultimate curse—not just personal death but extinction of one's household, name, and legacy. Covenant blessings included numerous descendants and lasting inheritance; covenant curses included childlessness, household destruction, and name being blotted out (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). David invokes covenant curse language, praying God's judgment extend to multiple generations of unrepentant enemies.

Peter quotes this verse (from the Septuagint's slightly different reading) in Acts 1:20 regarding Judas Iscariot: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein." This apostolic use demonstrates these imprecations weren't merely David's personal vendettas but prophetic prayers pointing to ultimate judgment on those who betray God's Messiah. Judas's desolate field became physical fulfillment of this prophetic prayer.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare commonly included destroying enemy cities, burning houses, and eradicating populations to prevent future threat. While Scripture condemns pagan nations' total warfare against Israel (Amos 1:11, 13), it prescribes similar measures against Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 20:16-18) and permits them against distant enemies (Deuteronomy 20:10-15). David's imprecation fits within covenantal warfare theology where God uses Israel to execute judgment on persistent evil.

The language of desolation echoes prophetic judgment oracles against nations (Isaiah 13:19-22, Jeremiah 49:18, Zephaniah 2:13-15). When God judges wickedness thoroughly, the result is uninhabitable waste—physical manifestation of spiritual reality.

Peter's application to Judas (Acts 1:20) demonstrates apostolic interpretive method. David's prayer regarding enemies became prophetic of Messiah's betrayer. The desolate field Judas bought with blood money fulfilled this psalm.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's use of this verse regarding Judas inform Christian interpretation of imprecatory psalms?
2. What does the severity of this judgment—extending to household and inheritance—reveal about sin's comprehensive corruption?
3. How should believers balance praying for justice with Jesus's command to forgive enemies personally?

Interlinear Text

תְּהִי

H1961

לְתַהְיָה
Let their habitation

H2918

בְּיַרְתָּם מִ

H8074

נִשְׁטָמָה הַ

בְּאֹהֶלְיוֹן מִ

H168

וְהַיְתָה אֶל בְּאֹהֶלְיוֹן מִ

H408 H1961

וְשָׁבָן

and let none dwell

H3427

Additional Cross-References

Acts 1:20 (Parallel theme): For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

Matthew 23:38 (Parallel theme): Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

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