

Zechariah 13:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

Analysis

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. Following the promise of cleansing through the fountain (13:1), God now describes comprehensive spiritual purification. The phrase "**in that day**" (bayom hahu, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) links this to Messiah's coming and kingdom. "**I will cut off the names of the idols**" (akhrit et-shemot ha-atzabim, אַחֲרִית אֶת־שְׁמוֹת הַתְּצַבִּים) promises total eradication of idolatry—not just destroying physical idols but eliminating their very names from memory.

The Hebrew word for idols, atzabim (תְּצַבִּים), literally means "pains" or "sorrows," emphasizing idolatry's destructive nature. Post-exilic Israel indeed largely abandoned physical idolatry (unlike pre-exilic generations), though spiritual idolatry remained. "**And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land**" connects false prophecy with demonic influence. The term "**unclean spirit**" (ruach ha-tumah, רוּחַ הַטְּמָאָה) contrasts with the Holy Spirit (ruach ha-kodesh, רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ)—false prophets operate under satanic deception (1 Kings 22:22-23, 1 John 4:1-6).

This dual cleansing—removal of idols and false prophets—addresses both objects of false worship and purveyors of false teaching. The New Testament shows partial

fulfillment as the gospel spreads, with ultimate fulfillment in the new creation where nothing unclean enters (Revelation 21:27, 22:15). Christ's ministry included casting out demons and warning against false prophets (Matthew 7:15, 24:11, 24).

Historical Context

Post-exilic Israel never returned to the blatant idolatry that characterized pre-exilic Judah. The trauma of Babylonian exile effectively cured them of worshiping physical idols like Baal and Asherah. However, false prophecy remained a threat—those who claimed divine authority but spoke deception. Verses 3-6 describe the shame and exposure awaiting false prophets. Historically, this prophecy looked toward the Messianic age when truth would triumph over falsehood. Jesus fulfilled this by exposing false teachers (Matthew 23) and commissioning apostles to preach truth (Matthew 28:19-20). The early church struggled with false prophets (2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1), but God's word prevailed. Eschatologically, when Christ returns, all deception will end—Satan bound (Revelation 20:2-3), false prophet destroyed (Revelation 19:20), and only truth remaining in God's eternal kingdom.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'idols' (anything taking God's place in affection or trust) need to be 'cut off' from your life so their names aren't even remembered?
2. How can you discern between true prophetic teaching (proclaiming God's word faithfully) and false prophecy influenced by 'unclean spirits'?
3. What does the connection between idolatry and false prophecy teach about the relationship between right worship and right doctrine?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה H1961	בֵּי יוֹם H3117	וַאֲנִי הָיָה H1931	וְהָיָה H3068	וְהָיָה H3068
And it shall come to pass in that day		saith	the LORD	
		H5002		
וְהָיָה H6635	וְהָיָה H3772	וְהָיָה H853	וְהָיָה H8034	וְהָיָה H6091
of hosts	that I will cut off	the names	of the idols	out of the land
				H776
וְהָיָה H3808	וְהָיָה H2142	וְהָיָה H5750	וְהָיָה H1571	וְהָיָה H853
and they shall no more be remembered				
וְהָיָה H5030	וְהָיָה H853	וְהָיָה H7307	וְהָיָה H2932	וְהָיָה H5674
and also I will cause the prophets	spirit	and the unclean	to pass	
				H4480
וְהָיָה H776				
out of the land				

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 22:22 (Spirit): And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Hosea 2:17 (Parallel theme): For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Exodus 23:13 (Parallel theme): And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Ezekiel 30:13 (References Lord): Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.

Revelation 19:20 (Prophecy): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Isaiah 2:20 (Parallel theme): In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

Isaiah 2:18 (Parallel theme): And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

Psalms 16:4 (Parallel theme): Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Jeremiah 29:23 (References Lord): Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.