

Jeremiah 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Analysis

This verse begins the account of Jeremiah's prophetic call with the familiar formula 'Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying.' The divine communication is specific, personal, and initiating—God addresses Jeremiah directly before any human commissioning or priestly ordination. This pattern appears throughout Scripture: God calls individuals sovereignly (Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul), often surprising them and overriding their self-assessment. The simplicity of the statement—God spoke, Jeremiah heard—establishes the prophet's authority. He didn't volunteer for this role, seek mystical experiences, or gradually develop religious convictions. Rather, the transcendent Creator-God broke into his life with a specific message and mission. This divine initiative removes grounds for rejecting the prophet's message as mere human opinion. If God spoke (and Scripture affirms He did), then response is mandatory, not optional.

Historical Context

Prophetic call narratives follow a pattern in Scripture: divine confrontation, commission, objection, divine reassurance, and sign. Jeremiah's call (verses 4-19) parallels Moses (Exodus 3-4), Gideon (Judges 6), and Isaiah (Isaiah 6). These accounts establish prophetic legitimacy—true prophets don't self-appoint but are divinely commissioned. In ancient Near Eastern contexts, prophetic figures existed in various cultures (Mari texts, Egyptian prophecies), but Israel's prophets were distinctive in receiving direct communication from Yahweh, the covenant God. The phrase 'the word of the LORD came' appears over 100 times in Jeremiah alone, emphasizing that this book contains divine revelation, not human speculation.

Jeremiah's experience stands in contrast to false prophets who claimed divine inspiration without genuine encounter (Jeremiah 23:16-22, 28-32).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's initiative in calling Jeremiah challenge contemporary notions that religious experience originates in human seeking or self-discovery?
2. What difference does it make whether Scripture contains human religious ideas about God versus God's actual revealed word to humanity?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י'	דָּבָר	יְהוָה ה'	אֵל י'	לֵאמֹר:
H1961	Then the word	of the LORD	H413	came unto me saying
	H1697	H3068		H559

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 3:16 (Word): And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,