

Jeremiah 12:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

Analysis

This verse warns of judgment for refusal: 'But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.' The conditional 'if they will not obey' (im lo yishme'u) makes the offer genuine, not automatic. 'Utterly pluck up' (natosh entosh) uses emphatic verbal construction—complete removal. 'Destroy' (abad) indicates perish, be lost. Nations who refuse the invitation to learn YHWH's ways face total destruction. The choice is binary: join God's people through faith or face judgment as God's enemies. This concludes chapter 12's movement from Jeremiah's complaint through divine response to universal invitation with warning.

Historical Context

This warning was fulfilled in various degrees for surrounding nations. Edom in particular faced complete destruction (Obadiah, Malachi 1:2-5), becoming a byword for divine judgment. The binary choice—inclusion or destruction—anticipates gospel proclamation: believe and be saved, or refuse and perish. The Old Testament already contains this universal invitation with consequences.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the binary choice between inclusion and destruction prefigure the gospel's offer and warning?
2. What nations today might be in the position of refusing to 'learn the ways' of God's people?

Interlinear Text

הַ וְאַתָּה וְיִשְׁמֶן עַזְנֵי נְתַת וְשַׁבַּע
H518 H3808 But if they will not obey I will utterly H853 H1931
H8085 H5428 H1471
וְיִהְרָא אֶת־נָאָמָן אֶת־יְהֹוָה
H5428 H6 H5002 H3068
I will utterly and destroy saith the LORD

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 60:12 (Parallel theme): For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

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