

Jeremiah 17:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

Analysis

Jeremiah's message specifically addresses "kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem"—the three primary groups comprising the covenant community. The repetition emphasizes that God's word applies to everyone without exception. "Hear ye the word of the LORD" is the classic prophetic summons demanding attention and obedience, not mere passive listening.

The phrase "that enter in by these gates" indicates ongoing, repeated action—this applies to all who regularly use these entrances, encompassing the entire population. By addressing kings alongside common citizens, Jeremiah asserts that political authority does not exempt rulers from divine law. Kings remain under God's sovereignty and accountable to His covenant stipulations.

This verse establishes the Reformed principle that all human authority is subordinate to God's word. Magistrates and citizens alike stand under divine judgment. The prophetic word speaks truth to power, calling rulers to account. Christ proclaimed that His kingdom's subjects must hear and obey His voice (John 10:27), and earthly kingdoms will be judged by how they respond to His word (Rev 11:15).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings often claimed divine status or autonomous authority. Israel's covenant theology radically subordinated royal power to divine law (Deut 17:14-20). Prophets regularly confronted kings—Nathan rebuked David (2 Sam 12), Elijah confronted Ahab (1 Kgs 21), Isaiah counseled Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19-20). Jeremiah's ministry included multiple confrontations with kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, often at personal risk.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this passage challenge contemporary attitudes that exempt political leaders from biblical ethical standards?
2. In what ways do you need to hear God's word afresh rather than merely listening with familiarity?
3. What does it mean for believers to live under dual citizenship—subject to earthly rulers while ultimately accountable to God?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲמַרְתָּ	אֶל־לִיהֶם	שְׁמַע וְ	דְּבַר	יְהוָה	מְלִכֵי י
And say	H413	unto them Hear	ye the word	of the LORD	ye kings
H559		H8085	H1697	H3068	H4428
וְכָל־יְהוּדָה	וְכָל־יְהוּדָה	וְכָל־ל	יֹשְׁבֵי י	יְרוּשָׁלַם	
and all Judah	H3605	and all Judah	H3605	and all the inhabitants	of Jerusalem
H3063		H3063		H3427	H3389
הַבָּאִים	בַּשְּׁעָרִים	הָאֵלֶּה:			
that enter in	by these gates	H428			
H935	H8179				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 19:3 (Kingdom): And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

Jeremiah 22:2 (Kingdom): And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:

Ezekiel 2:7 (Word): And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.