

Jeremiah 21:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

Analysis

Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah—this brief verse serves as a transition from the king's desperate plea to God's devastating answer. The formula 'Thus shall ye say' (koh tomrun, כֹּה-תֹּאמֶר) introduces prophetic pronouncement, authorizing the messengers to speak God's word to the king. Jeremiah functions here as mediator between God and king, but unlike Moses who interceded for Israel, Jeremiah would deliver only judgment.

The brevity creates dramatic tension—what will God's answer be? Will He repeat past miracles? The reader who knows Zedekiah's history (his oath-breaking, imprisonment of Jeremiah, rejection of God's word) anticipates the answer will not be what the king hopes. This verse exemplifies Jeremiah's faithfulness: despite persecution by Judah's leadership, when the king seeks God's word, Jeremiah speaks it truthfully. He doesn't soften the message or seek revenge. This demonstrates the prophet's calling: to speak God's word regardless of personal consequence or the audience's receptivity. Jesus similarly spoke truth even when it cost Him everything (John 18:37).

Historical Context

The messenger formula 'Thus shall ye say' was standard in ancient Near Eastern diplomatic and prophetic contexts. The prophet served as God's ambassador to the king, just as human ambassadors carried messages between monarchs. Jeremiah's position was precarious: previous prophecies had led to his imprisonment (Jeremiah 37:15-16) and near-execution (Jeremiah 38:4-6). Yet when summoned by

royal messengers, he speaks God's truth. This reflects the prophet's understanding that he answered to divine authority above royal power. The historical Zedekiah was a weak, vacillating leader who sought counsel from multiple sources—Jeremiah, false prophets, Egyptian diplomats, his own officials—attempting to navigate between Babylon and Egypt without clear commitment. This moment represents one of several occasions when Zedekiah secretly consulted Jeremiah (see also Jeremiah 37:17, 38:14-28).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does Jeremiah's faithful delivery of God's word, despite previous persecution, teach about prophetic and pastoral calling?
2. How should the brevity and solemnity of this transitional verse prepare us for the weight of God's answer?

Interlinear Text

Then said	Jeremiah	H413	H3541	Then said	H413	H6667
H559	H3414			H559		

צִדְקָה: אֶל תָּאמֹן | כִּי אֶלְيָהוּ מִירָמִי הוּא תָּאמֹן |

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