

Jeremiah 21:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD;
Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

Analysis

The 'way of life' and 'way of death' recalls Moses' final sermon (Deut 30:15-19). God's covenant faithfulness includes both blessing and curse; here Jeremiah presents a stark choice - surrender to Babylon (life) or resist (death). This counter-intuitive counsel tested whether Judah trusted God's word over nationalistic pride. Christ later uses similar language about narrow and wide ways (Matt 7:13-14).

Historical Context

Spoken to King Zedekiah around 588 BC as Babylon besieged Jerusalem. The advice to surrender seemed like treason, yet it was God's revealed will for that moment in redemptive history.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. When has God's wisdom seemed to contradict human prudence in your life?
2. How do you discern between faith that perseveres and presumption that ignores God's revealed will?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה אֶתְמָרְתָּךְ בְּזִיה
H413 And unto this people H2088 Thus saith H3541 Thus saith H559 the LORD
H5971 H559 H3068

וְאֵת נָתַן לִפְנֵיכֶם אֶת־הַנֶּגֶב
H2005 Behold I set H853 and the way H1870 H2416 H853 H1870
H5414 H6440 H1870 H2416 and the way

בְּמִתְּמוֹת
of death
H4194

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 30:19 (Parallel theme): I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Deuteronomy 30:15 (Parallel theme): See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

Deuteronomy 11:26 (Parallel theme): Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;