

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

וְאֵל	הָעָם	הִזָּה	אָמַר	כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	
H413	And unto this people	H2088	Thus saith	H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	
	H5971		H559		H559	H3068	
הִנֵּנִי	נִתֵּן	לְפָנֶיךָ	אֶת	דֶּרֶךְ	הַחַיִּים	וְאֶת	דֶּרֶךְ
H2005	Behold I set	before	H853	and the way	of life	H853	and the way
	H5414	H6440		H1870	H2416		H1870
הַמָּוֶת:							
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;