

Jeremiah 23:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

Analysis

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran (לא-שלחתי...יהם רצוי)–lo-shalachti...v'hem ratsu)—the dual negation ('not sent...not spoken') versus dual action ('they ran...they prophesied') exposes unauthorized ministry. The verb רוץ (rutz, 'ran') suggests eager self-appointment rather than reluctant divine commission. These prophets volunteered; God's true prophets were conscripted.

Moses protested (Exodus 3-4), Jeremiah resisted (Jeremiah 1:6), Isaiah felt unworthy (Isaiah 6:5)—authentic prophets were reluctant conscripts. False prophets ran eagerly because comfortable lies require no courage. Paul insisted 'called to be an apostle' (Romans 1:1), not self-appointed. Contemporary ministry must distinguish divine sending from religious entrepreneurship.

Historical Context

Institutional prophetic guilds created professionals serving royal courts through favorable oracles. God's true prophets received direct, often traumatic commissioning. The conflict between institutional religion and authentic calling continues—compare Jesus versus Pharisees, Paul versus Judaizers.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish self-appointed ministry from genuine divine calling?
2. What might you be running toward in spiritual service without being sent?
3. How does eagerness to prophesy without divine commission manifest today?

Interlinear Text

לֹא שֶׁלֶת חֲתִינִי אַתָּה בְּבָבָא יְמִינְךָ וְאַתָּה כִּצְוָה לֹא
H3808 I have not sent H853 these prophets H1992 yet they ran H3808
H7971 H5030 H7323

נִבְאָוֶן
I have not spoken H413 H1992 to them yet they prophesied H5012
H1696

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 14:14 (Prophecy): Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Jeremiah 27:15 (Prophecy): For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

Jeremiah 23:32 (Prophecy): Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

