

Jeremiah 27:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

Analysis

I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words—Having addressed foreign nations, Jeremiah now turns to Judah's king with the identical message. Zedekiah (598-586 BC), installed by Nebuchadnezzar as vassal king after deposing Jehoiachin, faced pressure from nationalistic voices urging rebellion. The phrase **according to all these words** emphasizes that God makes no distinction—Judah receives the same counsel as pagan nations: submit to Babylon.

Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live—The imperative **bring** (havi'u, הַבֵּיאוּ) demands decisive action. The promise is stark and simple: **and live** (vikhyu, וַיַּחֲיֻ). Life or death hinged on this choice. Deuteronomy's covenant blessings and curses had come to this moment: 'I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life' (Deuteronomy 30:19). Submitting to Babylon was choosing life; rebelling was choosing death. This wasn't political calculation but theological obedience—recognizing that God had given dominion to Babylon for this season, and resistance was therefore rebellion against God Himself. Zedekiah tragically chose death, breaking his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 17:11-21) and bringing catastrophic judgment.

Historical Context

Zedekiah was Judah's last king, a weak ruler influenced by court officials, false prophets, and Egyptian promises. Though he occasionally consulted Jeremiah privately (Jeremiah 37:17, 38:14-16), he lacked courage to obey publicly. He rebelled against Babylon around 588 BC, triggering the final siege. When Jerusalem fell (586 BC), Zedekiah attempted escape but was captured, witnessed his sons' execution, was blinded, and died in Babylonian prison (2 Kings 25:7; Jeremiah 52:10-11). His tragic end fulfilled Jeremiah's warning: choosing rebellion over submission brought the very destruction he sought to avoid. Had he obeyed, Jerusalem might have been spared and the temple preserved.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What made Zedekiah's choice so difficult, and what similar pressures might cloud our obedience to God's clear word?
2. How does this passage illustrate that God's call to 'life' sometimes requires choices that feel like defeat or surrender?
3. In what areas might God be calling you to 'bring your neck under the yoke' of circumstances you'd rather resist?

Interlinear Text

כָּל דְּבָרָתִי יְהוּדָה מֶלֶךְ צְדָקִי הָיָה וְאֵל
H413 also to Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke H3605
H6667 H4428 H3063 H1696

צָאָרֵיךְ מִתְּבָרֵךְ יְמֵינֶךָ לְאַמְתָּר בְּאַלְמָנָה
according to all these words saying Bring your necks
H1697 H428 H559 H935 H853 H6677

וְחַיָּה בְּעַל מֶלֶךְ בְּבָבִל וְעַמְּךָ אֶת וְעַבְדָּךָ
under the yoke king of Babylon and serve H853 him and his people and live
H5923 H4428 H894 H5647 H5971 H2421

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:17 (Kingdom): Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

Jeremiah 28:1 (Kingdom): And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,