

Jeremiah 27:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live:
wherefore should this city be laid waste?

Analysis

Serve the king of Babylon, and live (עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְחִיּוּ)—God's command to abad (serve, become subject to) Babylon scandalized Jerusalem. Yet submission meant survival; rebellion meant Jerusalem's destruction. This sovereign reversal—pagan empire as God's instrument—demolished Judah's presumption that God must defend Zion regardless of covenant faithfulness.

Wherefore should this city be laid waste? (לָמָּה תִּהְיֶה הָעִיר הַזֹּאת חֲרָבָה)—The rhetorical question exposes the tragic irony: resistance to God's revealed will, cloaked in patriotic zeal, would accomplish what submission prevented. The Hebrew chorbah (waste, ruin) anticipates the 586 BC destruction—a preventable catastrophe if Judah had heeded Jeremiah.

Historical Context

Jeremiah's counsel contradicted everything Judah believed about God's unconditional protection of Jerusalem and the Davidic throne. This 'defeatist' message led to accusations of treason (37:13-14). Yet events proved Jeremiah right—Zedekiah's rebellion brought total destruction.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'surrender' might God be calling you to that your pride interprets as betrayal of principle?
2. How do you distinguish between faithfulness that requires resistance and faithfulness that requires submission?
3. When have you seen catastrophe result from refusing to accept God's counterintuitive direction?

Interlinear Text

אֶל	תִּשְׁמָע ו	אֵלֵיהֶם	עֲבֹד ו	אֶת	מֶלֶךְ	בָּבֶל
H408	Hearken	H413	not unto them serve	H853	the king	of Babylon
	H8085		H5647		H4428	H894
וְחַי ו	לָמָּה	תִּהְיֶה	הָעִיר	הַזֹּאת	חֲרָבָה:	
and live	H4100	H1961	wherefore should this city	H2063	be laid waste	
H2421			H5892		H2723	

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org