

Jeremiah 35:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

Analysis

Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father (הֵקִימוּ בְנֵי־יוֹנָדָב בֶּן־רֶחָב אֶת־מִצְוַת אָבִיהֶם heqimu b'nei-Yonadav ben-Rekhav et-mitzvat avihem)—The verb הֵקִימוּ (heqim, 'performed/established') means to stand up, fulfill, accomplish completely. The Rechabites didn't merely acknowledge Jonadab's command but enacted it across centuries.

But this people hath not hearkened unto me (וְהָעָם הַזֶּה לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי v'ha'am hazeh lo sham'u elai)—The devastating contrast: pagan descendants obeyed a dead man; covenant children disobeyed the living God. The disproportion magnifies Judah's guilt—if human fatherly authority commands such loyalty, how much more divine Fatherly authority? The logic mirrors Jesus's 'how much more' arguments (Matthew 7:11). God uses shame as evangelistic strategy: let Gentile faithfulness rebuke Jewish unfaithfulness.

Historical Context

This argument-from-lesser-to-greater appears throughout prophetic literature: Isaiah contrasts Judah unfavorably with pagan nations (1:3), Ezekiel with Sodom (16:48), Jesus with Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba (Matthew 12:41-42). The

Rechabites join this prophetic 'hall of shame'—non-Israelites whose obedience condemns Israel's disobedience.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the Rechabites' multi-generational obedience to a fallible ancestor expose the shallowness of your sporadic obedience to an infallible God?
2. In what areas of life are unbelievers more faithful to their convictions than you are to biblical truth—and what does that reveal?
3. Why does God use the obedience of outsiders (Rechabites, Ninevites, Roman centurions) to shame His own people, and what does that teach about judgment beginning 'at the house of God' (1 Peter 4:17)?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	הֵקֵן יָמֹוֹ	בְּנֵי	יְהוֹנָדָב בֶּן	בְּנֵי	רַכָּב בֶּן
H3588	have performed	Because the sons	of Jonadab	Because the sons	of Rechab
	H6965	H1121	H3082	H1121	H7394
אֶת	מִצְוַת	אֲבִיהֶם	אֲשֶׁר	צִוָּה	
H853	the commandment	of their father	H834	which he commanded	
	H4687	H1		H6680	
	וְהָעָם	לֹא הִזְהָ	שָׁמְעוּ	אֵלַי:	
them but this people	H5971	H2088	H3808	hath not hearkened	H413
			H8085		

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 1:6 (Parallel theme): A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Jeremiah 35:14 (Word): The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

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