

Jeremiah 36:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

Analysis

Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll. This verse reveals a crucial moment of moral courage within King Jehoiakim's court. Three officials—Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah—interceded (paga, פָּגָע) with the king, pleading that he not destroy God's written word. The Hebrew verb suggests urgent, fervent entreaty, even confrontation.

Gemariah was the son of Shaphan the scribe, from a family known for supporting godly reform under King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-13). This detail indicates that remnants of faithful leadership remained even in this apostate period. Their intercession demonstrates that even in corrupt systems, individuals can stand for truth and righteousness, though they may not prevail.

The phrase "but he would not hear them" (lo shama, לֹא שָׁמַע) uses the Hebrew verb for hearing that implies obedience and response, not just auditory reception. Jehoiakim's refusal reveals hardened rebellion against both human counsel and divine revelation. This scene foreshadows the king's fate and Judah's destruction—rejecting God's word leads to judgment. The officials' failed intercession parallels Christ's rejection by religious and political leaders who refused to hear His message (John 1:11, Acts 4:18-20).

Historical Context

This event occurred in 605/604 BCE during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, shortly after Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah. Jeremiah had dictated God's prophecies to his scribe Baruch, who then read them publicly in the temple. When the scroll reached the king's winter house, Jehoiakim methodically cut and burned it section by section as it was read—an act of supreme contempt for God's word.

King Jehoiakim (609-598 BCE) was installed by Egypt and proved to be one of Judah's most wicked kings. Unlike his father Josiah who honored God's word (2 Kings 22-23), Jehoiakim practiced oppression, injustice, and idolatry (Jeremiah 22:13-19). His burning of the scroll represented official royal rejection of prophetic authority and divine warning.

The three officials who interceded came from influential families. Their opposition shows that even in Jehoiakim's corrupt administration, some retained respect for prophecy and feared the consequences of defying God. Their failed intercession illustrates the tragic reality that individual righteousness cannot avert national judgment when leadership persists in rebellion. Within decades, Jehoiakim's actions would contribute to Jerusalem's destruction and the Babylonian exile.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the failed intercession of these officials teach us about standing for truth in corrupt systems?

2. How does Jehoiakim's response to God's word illustrate the danger of hardened hearts toward Scripture?
3. In what ways might we subtly "burn" God's word today by ignoring or rejecting what it says?
4. What responsibility do those with influence have to speak truth to power, even when it may be rejected?
5. How does this passage inform our understanding of God's patience and the limits of His forbearance with willful rebellion?

Interlinear Text

וְגַם	אֶלְנָתָן	וְזֶדְקִיהֵה	וְגַמְרִיאֵה	הָפַגְתָּה
H1571	Nevertheless Elnathan	and Delaiah	and Gemariah	had made intercession
H494		H1806	H1587	H6293
לְרַבְלָתִים	שֶׁרֶת	בְּתַלְתָּה	אֶת	לֹא
to the king	that he would not burn		the roll	
H4428	H1115	H8313	H853	H3808
שָׁמַע	אֶלְיָהָם:			
but he would not hear		H413		
H8085				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 36:12 (Kingdom): Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

Genesis 37:22 (Parallel theme): And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.