

Jeremiah 36:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

Analysis

And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. The comprehensive scope of judgment—**him and his seed and his servants**—shows that Jehoiakim's sin infected his entire administration. The word **punish** (paqad, פָּקַד, meaning to visit, attend to, or reckon with) indicates divine visitation in judgment. The phrase **for their iniquity** (al-avonam, עַל-עֲוֹנָם) uses avon (עָוֹן), meaning guilt, iniquity, or the consequence of sin—emphasizing moral culpability, not mere misfortune.

The judgment extends beyond the king to **the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the men of Judah**—the entire nation bears responsibility. God will bring **all the evil that I have pronounced** (kal-hara'ah asher dibbarti, כָּל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי), meaning every warned consequence, every covenant curse, every prophesied judgment. The final indictment is devastating: **but they hearkened not** (velo shama'u, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ). The verb shama (שָׁמַע) means to hear with intent to obey. They heard the words but refused obedience—the defining sin of Israel's exile generation (7:13, 25-26). This refusal to hear made judgment inevitable and complete.

Historical Context

This comprehensive judgment was fulfilled in stages. Jehoiakim died in disgrace (597 BC), his son Jehoiachin was exiled after three months (597 BC), Jerusalem's nobility and craftsmen were deported (597 BC), and finally Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed with mass exile (586 BC). The "evil" (calamity, disaster) God pronounced included all the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-29: military defeat, foreign domination, exile, land desolation, famine, and destruction of the temple. Jeremiah had warned of these consequences for twenty-three years (25:3), pleading for repentance, but the people—led by kings like Jehoiakim—refused to listen. The phrase "they hearkened not" became Judah's epitaph. The tragedy was preventable; the judgment was just; the responsibility was corporate. The exile lasted seventy years, exactly as Jeremiah prophesied, vindicating the word they refused to hear.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the phrase 'but they hearkened not' teach about the difference between hearing God's word and obeying it?
2. How does the comprehensive scope of judgment (king, servants, inhabitants) illustrate the corporate nature of covenant responsibility?
3. In what ways might we be guilty of hearing Scripture's warnings but failing to 'hearken'—to obey with responsive action?

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against them but they hearkened
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Jeremiah 19:15 (Evil): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced

against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

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