

Jeremiah 38:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

Analysis

If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? Jeremiah's opening question reveals the prophet's precarious position. The Hebrew verb nagad (נָגַד, "to declare/tell") carries the sense of making something openly known. Jeremiah had already proclaimed God's judgment requiring surrender to Babylon—a message so politically inflammatory that it had landed him in a muddy cistern (38:6). His fear was justified: prophets who spoke unpopular truth often faced execution (26:20-23).

If I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? The verb ya'ats (יָאַת, "to counsel/advise") indicates Jeremiah's role as God's spokesman offering divine wisdom, not mere human opinion. Yet Zedekiah's track record showed repeated unwillingness to obey (shama, שָׁמַע) God's word through Jeremiah (37:2). This tragic pattern—seeking God's word while refusing to obey it—characterizes Zedekiah's entire reign and epitomizes religious hypocrisy.

Historical Context

This secret meeting occurred circa 587 BC during Babylon's siege of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, a weak puppet king installed by Nebuchadnezzar, was caught between pro-Egyptian court officials who wanted resistance and God's prophet who demanded surrender. Jeremiah had already been imprisoned twice for his unpopular message (37:15, 38:6).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you ever seek God's guidance while already resolved not to obey if it conflicts with your plans?
2. What makes Jeremiah willing to speak truth despite knowing it might cost him his life?
3. How does Zedekiah's pattern of seeking but not heeding God's word appear in modern religious practice?

Interlinear Text

כל וא לב אג יד צדקְיָהוּ יְרָמִי הָוּ אֶתְמָר
said Then Jeremiah unto Zedekiah If I declare H3808
H559 H3414 H413 H6667 H3588 H5046 H0

תְּמִימִיתִ נִי תְּמִימִיתִ נִי יְכִי
it unto thee wilt thou not surely it unto thee wilt thou not surely H3588
H4191 H4191

אַלְכָה לֹא תִשְׁמַע עֲזָבָתִךְ
and if I give thee counsel wilt thou not hearken H413
H3289 H3808 H8085