

Jeremiah 38:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me:

Analysis

But if thou refuse to go forth—The Hebrew *ma'en* (מֵאֵן, "to refuse") indicates willful rejection, not mere hesitation. God's ultimatum left no middle ground. Zedekiah's "refusal" would be active rebellion against divine command, not passive indecision.

This is the word that the LORD hath shewed me—The verb *ra'ah* (רָאָה, "to see/show") in the Hiphil stem indicates divine revelation. What follows (v. 22-23) is prophetic vision, not Jeremiah's speculation. God granted Jeremiah foresight into the specific humiliation awaiting Zedekiah: his own palace women would taunt him using a proverbial saying about feet stuck in mud. This divine preview gave Zedekiah one final chance to avoid the prophesied shame by surrendering.

Historical Context

Prophetic visions often included specific, verifiable details that would authenticate the prophet when fulfilled. The reference to palace women being taken to Babylonian princes (v. 22) anticipates the harem's capture, a standard feature of ancient Near Eastern conquest that symbolized the king's total humiliation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does God's detailed preview of consequences reveal about His desire for Zedekiah to choose rightly?
2. How does specific prophetic detail serve to authenticate God's word and remove excuses for disobedience?
3. Why might even clear divine revelation fail to change a heart set on rebellion?

Interlinear Text

וְאִם	מֵאֵל	אֶתְּ הַ	לֵךְ אֶתְּ	זֶה הַ	הַדָּבָר רַ	אֲשֶׁר רַ
H518	But if thou refuse	H859	to go forth	H2088	this is the word	H834
	H3986		H3318		H1697	
הָרָא נִי	יְהוָה:					
hath shewed	that the LORD					
H7200	H3068					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 2:7 (Word): And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.