

Jeremiah 40:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Analysis

Nebuzar-adan's words to Jeremiah demonstrate remarkable theological awareness for a pagan official: 'The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.' This acknowledgment of Yahweh's sovereignty over Judah's fate vindicates Jeremiah's prophetic ministry. The pagan Babylonian understood what Judah's leaders refused to accept—this judgment came from the God of Israel, not merely Babylonian military prowess. The phrase 'thy God' shows Nebuzar-adan distinguished Jeremiah from other Jews who abandoned their covenant loyalty. The verb 'pronounced' (dibber in Hebrew) indicates definitive divine decree, not arbitrary human action. This public acknowledgment by Israel's conqueror that Judah's fall resulted from divine judgment rather than Babylonian superiority provided theological vindication for Jeremiah's unpopular ministry. It also demonstrated to exiles that Babylon wasn't defeating Yahweh—rather, Yahweh was using Babylon as His instrument of covenant judgment, exactly as Jeremiah prophesied. This pattern of God causing even pagan rulers to acknowledge His sovereignty appears throughout Scripture (see Cyrus in Isaiah 44-45, Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, Darius in Daniel 6). It confirms that God's purposes will be recognized even by those outside the covenant community.

Historical Context

This conversation occurred at Ramah in 586 BC, shortly after Jerusalem's destruction. That a Babylonian military commander could articulate accurate

Israelite theology reflects either direct instruction from Nebuchadnezzar (who had some theological education about Yahweh through Daniel and others at his court) or observation of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry. Babylon's policy toward conquered peoples included understanding their religious structures and claims, allowing them to identify and leverage pro-Babylonian elements within subjugated populations. Nebuzar-adan's speech also served propaganda purposes: attributing Judah's fall to their own God's judgment rather than Babylonian conquest alone could reduce resistance and bitter resentment among the surviving population. However, the theological accuracy suggests genuine understanding, not mere political manipulation. This represents a recurring biblical pattern where God raises up unlikely witnesses—Pharaoh's magicians (Exodus 8:19), Balaam (Numbers 23-24), the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10), and even demons (Mark 1:24) acknowledging spiritual truth that covenant people miss.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it reveal about human spiritual blindness when pagan conquerors perceive God's judgment more clearly than religious leaders?
2. How does this passage challenge assumptions that only covenant people can recognize God's hand in historical events?
3. In what ways might God use unexpected voices today to confirm His word to those who refuse to hear His appointed messengers?

Interlinear Text

אֶל יְהוָה אָמַר לִירָמִים הַוְתָּבֵח יְמִינֵךְ כִּי
אָל יְהוָה אָמַר לִירָמִים הַוְתָּבֵח יְמִינֵךְ כִּי
took And the captain of the guard Jeremiah and said H413
H3947 H7227 H2876 H3414 H559

אֶל הַזֶּאת בְּכֻשׁ הַזֶּאת אֶל יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ דָּבָר אֶת
אֶל הַזֶּאת בְּכֻשׁ הַזֶּאת אֶל יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ דָּבָר אֶת
unto him The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil H413
H3068 H430 H1696 H853 H7451 H2063

בְּזַהֲרָה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ וּמְ
upon this place H2088
H4725

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