

Jeremiah 42:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

Analysis

Jeremiah's assembly of the leadership—"Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest"—mirrors their earlier approach to him (v.1), demonstrating prophetic reciprocity: they came to him collectively, now he addresses them collectively. The specific naming of Johanan signals his leadership role and particular responsibility for the community's response. The phrase 'all the captains of the forces' emphasizes military leadership's presence, significant because they had power to enforce or resist prophetic direction. The inclusion of 'all the people from the least even to the greatest' makes everyone witness to God's word, establishing corporate accountability—none could later claim ignorance. This comprehensive assembly ensures that God's revealed will is communicated publicly and completely, not filtered through intermediaries who might soften its message. The formal gathering anticipates the gravity of what follows: God's clear command to remain in Judah rather than flee to Egypt (verses 9-17), and His promise of protection versus warning of destruction based on obedience or disobedience. Jeremiah's gathering of everyone before delivering God's word demonstrates pastoral wisdom: ensuring all hear directly prevents misunderstanding and establishes that their response is fully informed choice, not ignorance.

Historical Context

This assembly occurred at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem after the ten-day waiting period. That Jeremiah could gather 'all the people from the least even to the greatest' indicates the remnant was small enough to assemble in one location—probably a few thousand people at most rather than tens of thousands. The emphasis on 'all the captains of the forces' shows the military commanders' crucial role: they had practical power to lead the community either in obedience (remaining in Judah) or rebellion (fleeing to Egypt). Ancient Near Eastern practice for delivering prophetic or royal decrees involved such public assemblies where entire communities heard official proclamations. This ensured transparency and prevented claims of misrepresentation. The assembly format also created social pressure toward compliance—publicly heard divine commands are harder to reject than private counsel. However, as subsequent events showed, even public declaration of God's clear word proved insufficient to prevent rebellion when the message contradicted the people's fear-driven plans. The assembly thus served both to establish divine will clearly and to demonstrate the people's culpability when they chose disobedience despite full knowledge.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why is public, comprehensive communication of God's word important for establishing accountability and preventing misunderstanding?
2. What does Johanan's specific naming suggest about leadership's particular responsibility for community response to divine direction?
3. How does including 'all the people from the least even to the greatest' in hearing God's word establish corporate rather than merely individual responsibility for obedience?

Interlinear Text

כַּל וְאֶל יְהִי אֶל

Then called H413 **he Johanan** H3110 **the son** H1121 **of Kareah** H7143

H7121

H3110

H1121

H7143

H3605

וְלֹכֶד אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־פָּתַח־יְמִינָה

and all the captains H8269 **of the forces** H2428

H834

H854

H3605

בְּעֵד

לִמְקֹט |

עַד

גָּדוֹל:

which were with him and all the people H5971 **from the least** H6996

H5704

even to the greatest H1419

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

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