

Jeremiah 38 - Jeremiah in the Dungeon; Zedekiah's Fears & Jeremiah's Advice

V. Present calamity of Judah (Jer 34:1—45:5)

(2) During the fall (Jer 37:1—39:18)

(B) Jeremiah thrown into and rescued from the cistern (38:1-28)

(a) Jeremiah thrown into the cistern (38:1-6)

(b) Jeremiah rescued from the cistern (38:7-13)

(c) Zedekiah consults Jeremiah (38:14-28)

Jeremiah 38

(B) Jeremiah thrown into and rescued from the cistern (38:1-28)

(a) Jeremiah thrown into the cistern (38:1-6)

1 Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchijah heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people, saying,

1 Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchijah heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people, saying,

1 Mattan's son Shephatiah, Pashhur's son Gedaliah, Shelemiah's son Jucal, and Malchijah's son Pashhur heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people:

1 Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

2 "This is what the LORD says: 'Anyone who stays in this city will die by the sword, by famine, or by plague; but *anyone* who surrenders to the Chaldeans will live and have his own life as plunder, and stay alive.'

2 "Thus says the LORD, 'He who stays in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence, but he who goes out to the Chaldeans will live and have his own life as booty and stay alive.'

2 "This is what the LORD says: 'Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by the plague, but the one who goes over to the Chaldeans will live. His life will be spared, and he will live.'

2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

- These are glib words, this is a serious game and these people are going to be slaughtered, starve and die of disease. Jeremiah is preaching desertion. He is preaching for them to give up, surrender in effect.

— Those that leave and yield themselves to the Chaldeans will still be slaves but at least they will live. That is what Jeremiah is saying that God is saying. These princes get really angry with Jeremiah. It is easy from a spiritual point of view to indict them but from a secular point of view it is a natural reaction from the princes of Judah.

3 This is what the LORD says: 'This city will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon and he will capture it.'"

3 Thus says the LORD, 'This city will certainly be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and he will capture it.'"

3 This is what the LORD says: 'This city will surely be given to the army of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it.'"

3 Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

4 Then the officials said to the king, "Please have this man put to death, since he is discouraging the men of war who are left in this city and all the people, by speaking words like these to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of this people, but rather their harm."

4 Then the officials said to the king, "Now let this man be put to death, inasmuch as he is discouraging the men of war who are left in this city and all the people, by speaking such words to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of this people but rather their harm."

4 Then the officials told the king, "Let this man be put to death because he's undermining the efforts of the soldiers who remain in this city and that of all the people by speaking words like these to them. Indeed, this man is not seeking the well-being of this people, but rather their harm."

4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

5 And King Zedekiah said, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can *do* nothing against you."

5 So King Zedekiah said, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can *do* nothing against you."

5 King Zedekiah said, "Look, he's in your hands, and the king can do nothing to you."

5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he *is* in your hand: for the king *is not he* that can do *any* thing against you.

- Zedekiah in his weakness doesn't protect Jeremiah. He had the perception to secretly seek out Jeremiah and ask what the Lord has to say, he must ascribe to Jeremiah some degree of spiritual insight. He may not have liked the message, he might even have discounted it, but for him to yield and allow these guys to take Jeremiah with the intent of killing him, is pretty weak. If Zedekiah was totally secular and hated Jeremiah, fine, he is wrong. What is disturbing is that he is just weak. He agrees with whoever spoke to him last.

6 So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Malchijah the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guardhouse; and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. Now in the cistern there was no water but *only* mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

6 Then they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchijah the king's son, which was in the court of the guardhouse; and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. Now in the cistern there was no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

6 So they threw Jeremiah into a cistern that belonged to the king's son Malchijah and was located in the courtyard of the guard. When they let Jeremiah down with ropes, because there was no water in the cistern—only mud—Jeremiah sank into the mud.

6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

- The court of the prison is apparently a very large but secure place. There is another dungeon, not the house of Jonathan, another dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech.

— They let Jeremiah down with cords. In the dungeon there was no water but mire so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. Apparently an unused cistern. They lower him down, they had the permission to kill him.

— They would kill him publicly, but they don't because he had a following, they choose to have him disappear quietly. They won't advertise that he is dead for practical purposes; they put him in the cistern with the intention apparently of just letting him die there. From their point of view and probably Jeremiah's, he was a goner.

(b) Jeremiah rescued from the cistern (38:7-13)

7 But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, while he was in the king's palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the cistern. Now the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin;

7 But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, while he was in the king's palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. Now the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin;

7 Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch in the king's house, heard that Jeremiah had been put in the cistern. The king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate,

7 Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

- This guy had guts; the princes that put Jeremiah in the dungeon were not trivial men, they were enough that the king didn't confront them.

— Ebedmelech sees the injustice and goes to the king. The king is sitting at the gate of Benjamin, probably doing some official administrative procedure. Being at the gate is analogous to being in court, hearing cases and making judgments.

8 and Ebed-melech went out from the king's palace and spoke to the king, saying,

8 and Ebed-melech went out from the king's palace and spoke to the king, saying,

8 so Ebed-melech went out of the palace and spoke to the king:

8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9 "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have thrown into the cistern; and he will die right where he is because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city."

9 "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have cast into the cistern; and he will die right where he is because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city."

9 "Your majesty, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to the prophet Jeremiah by throwing him into the cistern. He will die where he is because of the famine since there is no more bread in the city."

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for *there is* no more bread in the city.

- That is a gutsy thing to say, Jeremiah isn't too popular.

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take thirty men from here under your authority and bring Jeremiah the prophet up from the cistern before he dies."

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take thirty men from here under your authority and bring up Jeremiah the prophet from the cistern before he dies."

10 Then the king ordered Ebed-melech the Ethiopian: "Thirty men are at your disposal. Take them with you and bring up Jeremiah the prophet from the cistern before he dies."

10 Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

- Whoever talks to Zedekiah last gets an okay.

— The first group wants to kill him and he says to go do it; this guy says that this is sin and he says to go get him before he dies. Not too impressed with Zedekiah and his lack of backbone.

— In fairness to him, he must have some feeling for Jeremiah, and he does give the authority. It is interesting that it takes 30 men to get him out.

[Certain manuscripts say 3 rather than 30, but it turns out that the 30 seems to be the better manuscript.]

— The reason 30 men were required was probably to pull him up and out of the mire, and the rest to keep away interference. The king is authorizing to get him out and to take enough men with him so that he wouldn't be harassed.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men under his authority and went into the king's palace to a place beneath the storeroom, and took from there worn-out clothes and worn-out rags, and let them down by ropes into the cistern to Jeremiah.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men under his authority and went into the king's palace to a place beneath the storeroom and took from there worn-out clothes and worn-out rags and let them down by ropes into the cistern to Jeremiah.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to the palace, underneath the storeroom. He took worn out rags and worn out clothes from there, and using ropes he lowered them down to Jeremiah in the cistern.

11 So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

- This is an act of caring, because Jeremiah is emaciated, probably ill, and so take cloth and make a sling for him to slip into to haul him out of there.

12 Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Now put these worn-out clothes and rags under your armpits under the ropes"; and Jeremiah did so.

12 Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Now put these worn-out clothes and rags under your armpits under the ropes"; and Jeremiah did so.

12 Ebed-melech the Ethiopian told Jeremiah, "Put the worn out rags and clothes under your armpits under the ropes," and Jeremiah did as he said.

12 And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they pulled Jeremiah out with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern, and Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the guardhouse.

13 So they pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern, and Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guardhouse.

13 They pulled Jeremiah with the ropes and brought him up from the cistern, but Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

- He is still in prison, but he is out of this mire.

- Ebedmelech is untranslated it means *servant of the king*.

- In the Scripture when the Holy Spirit our Comforter shows up by type, He is always an unnamed servant.

— Right after Abraham offers Isaac in Gen 22, in Gen 24 he takes an unnamed servant (we know his name from other passages), but he is in the role of the Holy Spirit in getting a bride for Isaac.

— The book of Ruth, Boaz is introduced to Ruth by an unnamed servant.

— John 14 tells us why the Holy Spirit shows up by type as an unnamed servant, "*He will not bear witness of Himself...*"

— It is intriguing that this Ebedmelech is a comforter to Jeremiah, he is a type of the Holy Spirit in a sense. Jeremiah is a type of Christ.

— Ebedmelech is not his name it is translated as his name, but his name, Ebedmelech means *servant of the King*.

(c) Zedekiah consults Jeremiah (38:14-28)

14 Then King Zedekiah sent word and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance that is in the house of the LORD; and the king said to Jeremiah, "I am going to ask you something; do not hide anything from me."

14 Then King Zedekiah sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance that is in the house of the LORD; and the king said to Jeremiah, "I am going to ask you something; do not hide anything from me."

14 King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and had him brought to him at the third entrance to the LORD's Temple. The king told Jeremiah, "I'm going to ask you something, and don't hide anything from me."

14 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that *is* in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a

thing; hide nothing from me.

- Jeremiah gave him pretty straight answers earlier. However Zedekiah has just saved Jeremiah's life, so he can ask a favor.

15 And Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I tell you, will you not certainly put me to death? Besides, if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

15 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I tell you, will you not certainly put me to death? Besides, if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

15 Jeremiah told Zedekiah, "When I tell you, you will surely put me to death, won't you? And when I give you advice, you don't listen to me."

15 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?

16 But King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah in secret, saying, "As the LORD lives, who made this life for us, I certainly will not put you to death, nor will I hand you over to these men who are seeking your life."

16 But King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah in secret saying, "As the LORD lives, who made this life for us, surely I will not put you to death nor will I give you over to the hand of these men who are seeking your life."

16 Then King Zedekiah, in secret, swore an oath to Jeremiah: "As surely as the LORD lives, who gave us this life to live, I won't have you put to death, nor will I hand you over to these men who are seeking to kill you."

16 So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

- This court must have been a mess because this king is tiptoeing around the politics of the princes of Judah. He apparently is in a pretentious position. Zedekiah is giving Jeremiah a commitment of protection.

17 So Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God of armies, the God of Israel says: 'If you will indeed surrender to the **officers of the king of Babylon**, then you will live, this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will survive.'

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, 'If you will indeed go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you will live, this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will survive.'

17 So Jeremiah told Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'If you will immediately surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you will live, and this city won't be burned with fire. Both you and your family will live.'

17 Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

- "...officers of the king of Babylon" - Nebuchadnezzar has his second string watching the siege. This isn't a varsity deal, he has his second string in there.

-- Nebuchadnezzar is up at Riblah which is quite a ways away. He set up his command post up beyond Gilead to the north, a long way from Jerusalem. His princes are the ones running this siege. It is interesting that the text is sensitive to that.

18 But if you do not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be handed over to the Chaldeans; and they will burn it with fire, and you yourself will not escape from their hands."

18 But if you will not go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given over to the hand of the Chaldeans; and they will burn it with fire, and you yourself will not escape from their hand."

18 But if you don't surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given to the Chaldeans, and they'll burn it with fire. You won't escape from their hands."

18 But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

19 Then King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am in fear of the Jews who have deserted to the Chaldeans, for they may hand me over to them, and they will abuse me."

19 Then King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I dread the Jews who have gone over to the Chaldeans, for they may give me over into their hand and they will abuse me."

19 Then King Zedekiah told Jeremiah, "I'm afraid of the Judeans who have gone over to the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans may turn me over to them, and they may treat me harshly."

19 And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

20 But Jeremiah said, "They will not turn you over. Please obey the LORD in what I am saying to you, so that it may go well for you and you may live."

20 But Jeremiah said, "They will not give you over. Please obey the LORD In what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live."

20 Jeremiah said, "They won't turn you over. Obey the LORD in what I'm telling you, and it will go well for you and you will live."

20 But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver *thee*. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

21 But if you keep refusing to surrender, this is the word which the LORD has shown me:
21 But if you keep refusing to go out, this is the word which the LORD has shown me:
21 But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has shown me:
21 But if thou refuse to go forth, this *is* the word that the LORD hath shewed me:

22 'Behold, all of the women who have been left in the palace of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women will say, "Your close friends Have misled and overpowered you; While your feet were sunk in the mire, They turned back."

22 'Then behold, all of the women who have been left in the palace of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women will say, "Your close friends Have misled and overpowered you; While your feet were sunk in the mire, They turned back."

22 Look, all the women who are left in the house of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon, and will say, 'These friends of yours have mislead you and overcome you. Your feet have sunk down into the mire, but they have turned away.'

22 And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house *shall be* brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, *and* they are turned away back.

23 They are also going to bring out all your wives and your sons to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from their hand, but will be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned with fire."

23 They will also bring out all your wives and your sons to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from their hand, but will be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned with fire."

23 "They'll bring all your women and children out to the Chaldeans, and you won't escape from their hand. Indeed, you will be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned with fire."

23 So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no one know about these words, and you will not die.

24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no man know about these words and you will not die.

24 Then Zedekiah told Jeremiah, "Don't let anyone know about these words and you won't die.

24 Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

Zedekiah gets the message, doesn't heed it, and asks that this all be kept quiet.

25 But if the officials hear that I have talked with you and come to you and say to you, 'Tell us now what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide *it* from us and we will not put you to death,'

25 But if the officials hear that I have talked with you and come to you and say to you, 'Tell us now what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide *it* from us and we will not put you to death,'

25 If the officials hear that I've spoken with you, and they come to you and say, 'Tell us what you told the king, and what the king told you; don't hide it from us, and we won't put you to death,'

25 But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

- The princes = the princes of Judah

26 then you are to say to them, 'I was presenting my plea before the king, not to make me return to the house of Jonathan to die there."

26 then you are to say to them, 'I was presenting my petition before the king, not to make me return to the house of Jonathan to die there."

26 then you are to say to them, 'I was presenting my request to the king that I not be taken back to the house of Jonathan to die there."

26 Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

- Zedekiah asks him to keep quiet about what he really talked to Jeremiah about.

27 Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him. So he reported to them in accordance with all these words which the king had commanded; and they stopped speaking with him, since the conversation had not been overheard.

27 Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him. So he reported to them in accordance with all these words which the king had commanded; and they ceased speaking with him, since the conversation had not been overheard.

27 When all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him, he replied to them exactly as the king had ordered him. So they stopped speaking with him because the conversation had not been overheard.

27 Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.

- A lot of people are upset with Jeremiah because they feel he lied to the princes of Judah, he didn't lie, he just didn't tell them the whole truth. He told them that he made these supplications but he didn't explain that he gave the king the message that the king told him to keep a secret.

28 So Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was captured.

28 So Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guardhouse until the day that Jerusalem was captured.

28 Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

28 So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.