

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 321 – Zedekiah Reigns Through Jeremiah In Court Of Prison (Jeremiah 37:1-21)

1. Did king Zedekiah bring righteousness to the land of Judah?

No: *“(1) And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. (2) But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 37:1-2).*

- The appointment of Zedekiah as king (**II Kings 24:17** and **II Chronicles 36:10**).
- Disobedience from top to bottom amongst the children of Israel (**II Kings 24:18-19**, **Isaiah 1:3-4**, **Isaiah 9:13-17**, and **Jeremiah 4:22**).

2. What did Zedekiah request Jeremiah to do?

Prayer to God for them: *“And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us” (Jeremiah 37:3).*

- They may have wanted Jeremiah’s prayers, but God had instructed otherwise (**Jeremiah 7:12-16**, **Jeremiah 11:14**, and **Jeremiah 14:11-12**; cf. **Proverbs 29:1**).
- The power to change God’s mind was in the hands of Zedekiah and the people, but they refused to repent (**Jeremiah 3:11-20**; cf. **Proverbs 1:24-31**).

3. Prior to Jeremiah being in prison, who had caused the Chaldeans to depart from Jerusalem?

Egyptian army: *“(4) Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. (5) Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 37:4-5).*

- This is early in Zedekiah’s reign since Jeremiah was not imprisoned yet (**Jeremiah 32:2-3**).
- Egypt was known as a powerful nation that was leaned upon for strength (**Nahum 3:9**). They caused a brief retreat here (**Jeremiah 37:11**).

4. What message did God tell Jeremiah to deliver to Zedekiah?

Though the Chaldeans had been wounded, they were going to rise back up and destroy the city with fire: *“(6) Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, (7) Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. (8) And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. (9) Thus saith the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. (10) For*

though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire” (Jeremiah 37:6-10).

- Israel had a history of seeking help from Egypt and such failing (i.e. **II Kings 18:21, Isaiah 30:1-5, Isaiah 31:1-3, and Isaiah 36:6**).
- At some point, early in the invasion period, Egypt was cut off from helping Judah (**II Kings 24:1-7, Jeremiah 46:2, and Ezekiel 29:19**).
- God was behind Egypt’s loss (**Jeremiah 46:25**).

5. What happened to Jeremiah when he went into the land of Benjamin?

He was falsely accused of falling to the Chaldeans and jailed in the house of Jonathan the scribe: *“(11) And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, (12) Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people. (13) And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. (14) Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. (15) Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison” (Jeremiah 37:11-15).*

- Jeremiah sought to separate himself from the people (**Jeremiah 15:17**; cf. **II Corinthians 6:14-18**).
- Men of God falsely being accused of conspiracy, speaking against a nation in an evil way, etc.; was/is not as uncommon as we’d we could see (**Amos 7:10, Luke 23:2, and Acts 24:1-6**).
- False accusations against the faithful (**Psalms 35:11-12, Matthew 5:10-12, and Romans 3:8**).
- We’d do well to learn to live above reproach so that our conduct will always out speak any false charges against us (**I Peter 3:15-16**).
- Imprisonment for speaking the truth (**II Chronicles 18:12-26, Matthew 14:1-12, and Acts 5:14-42**).

6. When Zedekiah met secretly with Jeremiah, did Jeremiah soft-pedal the truth?

No: *“(16) When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; (17) Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. (18) Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? (19) Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land” (Jeremiah 37:16-19)?*

- Jeremiah spoke the truth (**Jeremiah 1:11-16**) even though it was hard to do and caused affliction for him (**Jeremiah 20:7-9**).
- Think of how they are punishing Jeremiah as God said would occur (**Jeremiah 1:17-19**) and what that means for them (**Proverbs 17:26**).
- Where are now your prophets that said Babylon would not come (**Jeremiah 27:14** and **Lamentations 2:14**)?

7. Did Zedekiah set Jeremiah free from captivity?

He took him from imprisonment in Jonathan's house to imprisonment in the court of the prison: *"(20) Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. (21) Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison"* (**Jeremiah 37:20-21**).

- Though Zedekiah was in error, Jeremiah showed respect in his approach to him which was wise in several ways (**Proverbs 20:2**, **Proverbs 24:21**, **Matthew 22:17-21**, and **I Peter 2:17**).
- Jeremiah stayed in the court of the prison even unto the day Jerusalem was taken (**Jeremiah 38:28**).
- Consider, Jeremiah was an enemy of the people, but still given some level of care (**Proverbs 16:7**).