

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 322 – Jeremiah's Words Witnessed Through His Imprisonment (Jeremiah 38:1-28)

1. What message did Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal, and Pashur witness Jeremiah saying 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) 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. (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” (Jeremiah 38:1-3).

- I cannot find much about Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal, and Pashur in the Scriptures to say they were princes, messengers of princes, or anything else.
- Jeremiah did not hide the message from ears that wanted to hear (**Jeremiah 20:1**, **Jeremiah 26:7**, and **Jeremiah 28:5**) and that includes princes (**Jeremiah 26:12**).
- As we have previously studied, if they were to stay in Jerusalem they would die or they could submit to captivity and live (**Jeremiah 24:1-10** and **Jeremiah 27:12-22**).
- It was sure (**Psalms 111:7** and **Isaiah 46:10**), Babylon was going to take Jerusalem (**Jeremiah 21:8-10**).

2. What did the princes ask the king to do to Jeremiah?

Put him to death: *“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” (Jeremiah 38:4).*

- Kill the messenger – not a new thought (**II Chronicles 24:20-21**).
- Against Jeremiah, this is the more common response to his prophesying by the “leaders” (**Jeremiah 26:11**; cf. **Micah 3:1-2**).
- Their charge was not about Jeremiah telling the truth, but rather that it caused the men of war in the city to be weakened. Shamefully, Israel had a history of blaming the true prophets for their troubles (**I Kings 18:17-18** and **Amos 7:10**).

3. What did the princes do to Jeremiah?

“(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. (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” (Jeremiah 38:5-6).

- Shamefully, the king was not holding his own as the authority amongst the people (**I Samuel 15:24**).
- The king should have been the feared figure (**Proverbs 20:2**).
- Casting the prophet of God into a dungeon with not water, just mud. They truly abused Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 20:7**; cf. **II Chronicles 36:14-16**).
- This is one reason it is often thought Jeremiah penned Lamentations (**Lamentations 3:48-53**).

4. What action did Ebedmelech the Ethiopian take when he heard what happened to Jeremiah?

He went to the king on behalf of Jeremiah to keep him from dying: *“(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; (8) Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, (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”* (**Jeremiah 38:7-9**).

- Something had to be said by someone (**Proverbs 24:11-12**).
- It is evil to judge another unrighteously (**Leviticus 19:15, Proverbs 18:5, John 7:24, and John 8:1-11**).

5. Was Jeremiah left to die after Ebedmelech's efforts?

No: *“(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. (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. (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 drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison”* (**Jeremiah 38:10-13**).

- **Jeremiah 37:21**
- Good to come to Ebedmelech for this (**Jeremiah 39:15-18**).

6. What transpired between Zedekiah and Jeremiah?

Zedekiah wanted the truth, agreed not to punish Jeremiah for delivering, and also agreed to not fully reveal their discussion to the princes: *“(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. (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) 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. (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: (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) 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 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 thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath shewed me: (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) 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 said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. (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: (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" (**Jeremiah 38:14-26**).*

- “Hide nothing from me”, though nothing had been hidden (cf. **Psalms 40:9**) expresses a true desire to hear and that sounds good (**Acts 13:7**), but...
- ... He didn't say he'd hearken to it and we know he did not (cf. **Jeremiah 52:1-14**).
- Just because someone wants to hear the truth, that doesn't mean they want to obey it (i.e. **Ezekiel 33:30-33**, **Luke 22:67-71**, **Acts 17:16-31**, and **Acts 28:17-31**).
- He did agree not to kill Jeremiah for telling him the truth (again; **Jeremiah 37:21**).
- Consider something... How can a man like Zedekiah know the Lord is the Creator of the soul (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**), but still rebel (**Romans 1:18-32**)?
- The message, again (see: **Jeremiah 38:1-3**), is that they should willingly go into captivity because they really can't stop it anyway and will live if they do so.
- Zedekiah was fearful of being mocked (**Proverbs 29:25** and **Luke 12:4-5**).
- Jeremiah besought him to obey the voice of the Lord (**Jeremiah 26:13**; cf. **Deuteronomy 11:27-28**) for Jeremiah knew that God could deliver Zedekiah (**II Kings 17:39**). But... **Jeremiah 7:23**.
- Terrible consequences occurred (**Lamentations 5:1-18**) because of Zedekiah's refusal to obey God's will (cf. **Isaiah 1:20**).

- Zedekiah wanted this discussion kept private and such was not a compromise of the truth (**Ezekiel 3:18-21**) for Jeremiah had already declared the same message publicly (**Jeremiah 19:14-16**, **Jeremiah 26:8**, **Jeremiah 38:4**, etc.).
- The king requested Jeremiah to only report that Jeremiah plead for his life and such was true (**Jeremiah 37:18-20**).

7. Did Jeremiah keep the peace between the king and the princes?

Yes: *“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”* (**Jeremiah 38:27**).

- Jeremiah followed the kings instructions and kept their communications private (**Proverbs 11:13**).
- There was no need for Jeremiah to cause problems for himself in this situation (**Proverbs 17:27-28** and **Proverbs 21:23**).

8. Where was Jeremiah when Jerusalem was taken?

He was still in the court of the prison: *“So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken”* (**Jeremiah 38:28**).

- Again, it is stated that Jeremiah was in the court of the prison until Jerusalem was taken (**Jeremiah 37:21** and **Jeremiah 39:10-14**).