

Bible Study • By Faith – An In-depth look at Hebrews 11**Lesson #51 • Hebrews 11:35b-38****Victory Over Circumstances****“Some Died by Stoning”****Life & Times of Jeremiah • Part 4****• H A N D O U T •**

► Part 3 ended approximately at the 10 year mark of Zedekiah's reign. Zedekiah had been conducting himself as though he was a loyal Vassal King. However, in secret, he was busy aligning himself with a coalition of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Phoenicia, who were plotting, with him, against Babylon. He has also made a separate alliance with Egypt for their help against the Babylonians.

When Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to pray for him and the kingdom of Judah, the Lord responded: *“Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, 'Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt.. Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.”*

► As we begin Part 4 of Jeremiah's life, Jeremiah's prophecies are being fulfilled with chilling accuracy. Egypt is on the march and when Nebuchadnezzar learns this is happening, he breaks off his siege of Jerusalem and goes to engage Egypt. It goes down exactly as the Lord said. The armies of Egypt retreat and Nebuchadnezzar is on his way back to Jerusalem to restart the Siege.

Zedekiah is about to make some decisions that will become an irreversible disaster for Judah. It will also become a time of great strife and trials for Jeremiah, personally...

Jeremiah is seized and imprisoned again, this time as a defector to Babylon ...

Jeremiah 36:11-16 • After the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there.

But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, arrested him and said, "You are deserting to the Babylonians!"

"That's not true!" Jeremiah said. "I am not deserting to the Babylonians." But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan, the secretary, which they had made into a prison. Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.

Q: Why was Jeremiah going to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of property? [ref: Jer. 32:6-12]

Q: Why did they think he was deserting Judah and going over to Babylon?

Q: Why were the officials angry with Jeremiah? Everything he had prophesied was coming true. So, why the anger?

Q: What exactly was the crime they accused Jeremiah of?

Q: Where was he imprisoned?

Zedekiah meets with Jeremiah in secret ...

Jeremiah 37:17 • Then King Zedekiah secretly sent for him [Jeremiah] and had him brought to the palace, where he asked him privately, "Is there any word from the Lord?"
"Yes," Jeremiah replied, "you will be handed over to the king of Babylon."

Q: Why did this meeting take place in secret, in private, with no witnesses?

Q: What is significant about Zedekiah asking Jeremiah "is there any Word from the Lord?"

Q: Jeremiah honestly responds to the King's question in spite of the situation he finds himself in. What does that tell us about Jeremiah, God's prophet?

Then Jeremiah reasons with King Zedekiah ...

Jeremiah 37:18-21 • Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "What crime have I committed against you or your officials or this people, that you have put me in prison?
Where are your prophets who prophesied to you: '*The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land*'?
But now, my lord the king, please listen. Let me bring my petition before you: Do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, or I will die there."
King Zedekiah then gave orders for Jeremiah to be placed in the courtyard of the guard and given bread from the street of the bakers each day, until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

Q: Jeremiah asked Zedekiah what his crime was that resulted in him being put into prison. **If** Zedekiah were honest, what would the answer to that question be?

Q: How does Jeremiah force Zedekiah to re-evaluate the prophecies he was hearing?

Q: How do we know that Zedekiah was re-evaluating the prophecies?

Q: Although Zedekiah doesn't free Jeremiah, how does he answer his request?

Q: Why would there be a notation that Jeremiah received the bread until all the bread in the city was gone.

Jeremiah was incarcerated in a cell in the Courtyard of the Guard when three Princes of Judah arrive on the scene, inflicting more suffering for Jeremiah ...

Jeremiah 38:1-3 · Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah had been telling the people.

He had been saying, "This is what the Lord says: 'Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be life. They will live!' The Lord also says: 'The city of Jerusalem will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.'"

Q: Ultimately, what does Jeremiah say the Lord is telling the people of Jerusalem to do?

Jeremiah 38:4-6 · So these officials went to the king and said, "Sir, this man must die! That kind of talk will undermine the morale of the few fighting men we have left, as well as that of all the people. This man is a traitor!"

King Zedekiah agreed. "All right," he said. "Do as you like. I can't stop you." So the officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into an empty cistern in the prison yard. It belonged to Malkijah, a member of the royal family. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a thick layer of mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down into it.

Q: What reason do these Princes of Judah give for Jeremiah's death sentence?

Q: What is the significance of the reference to the "few fighting men we have left?"

Q: Why would Zedekiah – Judah's King – say he couldn't control or stop the Princes of Judah who wanted to execute Jeremiah?

Q: How devastating was it for Jeremiah to be lowered into an empty cistern?

BUT ... God has a plan to rescue His prophet from certain death ...

Jeremiah 38:7-13 • But Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, an important court official, heard that Jeremiah was in the cistern.

At that time the king was holding court at the Benjamin Gate, so Ebed-melech rushed from the palace to speak with him. "My lord the king," he said, "these men have done a very evil thing in putting Jeremiah the Prophet into the cistern. He will soon die of hunger, for almost all the bread in the city is gone."

So the king told Ebed-melech, "Take thirty of my men with you, and pull Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies." So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to a room in the palace beneath the treasury, where he found some old rags and discarded clothing. He carried these to the cistern and lowered them to Jeremiah on a rope. Ebed-melech called down to Jeremiah, "Put these rags under your armpits to protect you from the ropes." Then when Jeremiah was ready, they pulled him out. So Jeremiah was returned to the courtyard of the guard – the palace prison cell – where he remained.

Q: What do we know about "Ebed-melech?"

Q: First Zedekiah allowed Jeremiah to be put into a cistern to die, saying he can't stop them, then he authorizes Jeremiah's rescue. What is going on with this King?

Q: Why thirty men? Certainly it wouldn't take that many to haul Jeremiah to the surface with ropes.

Q: What happened to Jeremiah once he was rescued from the Cistern?

King Zedekiah sets up another private meeting with Jeremiah ...

▶ Zedekiah was desperate to know what Jeremiah knew about his future, so, once again he had the prophet brought to him for another private meeting, this time at the third entrance to the Temple. The king admonished Jeremiah to tell him everything, without withholding any detail. Reluctant to disclose anything after the treatment he was enduring, Jeremiah replied to Zedekiah that, first of all, **you won't listen to me, and secondly, even if I do give you an answer, you will then kill me.**

Zedekiah assured Jeremiah that wasn't true. He then secretly swore an oath to Jeremiah:

"As surely as the Lord lives, who has given us breath, I will neither kill you, nor hand you over to those who are seeking your life."

Q: What is strange about the oath that Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah?

**Jeremiah, the servant of God takes the risk to deliver God's message to King Zedekiah.
It will be the final offer of God's Mercy ...**

Jeremiah 38:17-18 · Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live. But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from their hands.'"

Q: In what three ways does God identify himself in this passage?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q: What is God's final offer of Mercy to Zedekiah and the Nation of Judah?

Q: When was this same basic offer of Mercy first offered to man?

Jeremiah 38:19-23 · King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have gone over to the Babylonians, for the Babylonians may hand me over to them and they will mistreat me."

"They will not hand you over," Jeremiah replied. "Obey the Lord by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you, and your life will be spared."

But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the Lord has revealed to me: All the women left in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officials of the king of Babylon. Those women will say to you: "'They misled you and overcame you— those trusted friends of yours. Your feet are sunk in the mud; your friends have deserted you.' "All your wives and children will be brought out to the Babylonians. You yourself will not escape from their hands but will be captured by the king of Babylon; and this city will be burned down."

Zedekiah Chooses NOT to Choose and in Doing So Chooses to Reject God's offer of mercy ...

▶ Zedekiah then commanded Jeremiah not to let anyone know about this conversation. If anyone were to ask him about meeting with the King, he was to tell them he was pleading for the king not to send him back to Jonathan's house where he would surely die.

Jeremiah did as the king commanded him. Jeremiah was returned to his cell in the courtyard of the guard and there he remained until the day the City Walls of Jerusalem were breached and the city was captured by the Babylonian army.

Q: Why did Zedekiah not want anyone to know about his conversation with Jeremiah?

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Next Time ◆ Lesson #52
“Jeremiah – Part 5”