

Zedekiah Asks Jeremiah for Help (c. February 589 BC)

Jeremiah 21

Jeremiah's Answer to Zedekiah

- 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying,
- 2 "Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is warring against us; perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, so that *the enemy* will withdraw from us."
- 3 Then Jeremiah said to them, "You shall say to Zedekiah as follows:
- 4 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Behold, I am about to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are warring against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the wall; and I will gather them into the center of this city.
- 5 I Myself will war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation.
- 6 I will also strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great pestilence.
- 7 Then afterwards," declares the LORD, "I will give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He will not spare them nor have pity nor compassion."
- 8 "You shall also say to this people, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.
- 9 He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty.
- 10 For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good," declares the LORD. "It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire."

Warning to the House of David

- 11 "Then say to the household of the king of Judah, 'Hear the word of the LORD,
- 12 O house of David, thus says the LORD:

"Administer justice every morning;
 And deliver the *person* who has been robbed from the power of *his* oppressor,
 That My wrath may not go forth like fire
 And burn with none to extinguish *it*,
 Because of the evil of their deeds.

Warning to a Complacent City

- 13 "Behold, I am against you, O valley dweller,
 O rocky plain," declares the LORD,
 "You men who say, 'Who will come down against us?
 Or who will enter into our habitations?'
- 14 "But I will punish you according to the results of your deeds," declares the LORD,
 "And I will kindle a fire in its forest
 That it may devour all its environs.'""

Nebuchadnezzar Leaves Jerusalem to Deal with Pharaoh Hophra [Egypt] (589 BC)

Jeremiah 37:4–5

4 Now Jeremiah was *still* coming in and going out among the people, for they had not *yet* put him in the prison.

5 Meanwhile, Pharaoh's army had set out from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they lifted the *siege* from Jerusalem.

Hophra's Intervention Gives Zedekiah False Hope (589 BC)

Jeremiah 37:3, 6–10

3 Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "Please pray to the LORD our God on our behalf."

6 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

7 "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Thus you are to say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: "Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come out for your assistance is going to return to its own land of Egypt.

8 The Chaldeans will also return and fight against this city, and they will capture it and burn it with fire.'"

9 Thus says the LORD, 'Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely go away from us," for they will not go.

10 For even if you had defeated the entire army of Chaldeans who were fighting against you, and there were *only* wounded men left among them, each man in his tent, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.'"

Zedekiah and the Slaves (589 BC)

Jeremiah 34

Historical Summary

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, with all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion and all the peoples, were fighting against Jerusalem and against all its cities, saying,

2 "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and say to him: "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire.

3 You will not escape from his hand, for you will surely be captured and delivered into his hand; and you will see the king of Babylon eye to eye, and he will speak with you face to face, and you will go to Babylon.'"

4 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the LORD concerning you, 'You will not die by the sword.

5 You will die in peace; and as *spices* were burned for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so they will burn *spices* for you; and they will lament for you, "Alas, lord!"' For I have spoken the word," declares the LORD.

6 Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem

7 when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, *that is*, Lachish and Azekah, for they *alone* remained as fortified cities among the cities of Judah.

A Broken Promise of Freedom for the Slaves

8 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem to proclaim release to them:

9 that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman; so that no one should keep them, a Jew his brother, in bondage.

10 And all the officials and all the people obeyed who had entered into the covenant that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, so that no one should keep them any longer in bondage; they obeyed, and set *them free*.

11 But afterward they turned around and took back the male servants and the female servants whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection for male servants and for female servants.

God Denounces the Broken Promise

12 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

13 “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘I made a covenant with your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, saying,

14 “At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother who has been sold to you and has served you six years, you shall send him out free from you; [[Exod 21:1–4](#); [Deut 15:12–15](#)] but your forefathers did not obey Me or incline their ear to Me.

15 Although recently you *had* turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name.

16 Yet you turned and profaned My name, and each man took back his male servant and each man his female servant whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your male servants and female servants.”

Punishment for the Broken Promise

17 “Therefore thus says the LORD, ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming release each man to his brother and each man to his neighbor. Behold, I am proclaiming a release to you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine; and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

18 I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, *when* they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts—

19 the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—

20 I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

21 Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has gone away from you.

22 Behold, I am going to command,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them back to this city; and they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.”

Jeremiah’s Arrest and Imprisonment (589 BC)

Jeremiah 37:11–21

Jeremiah’s Arrest

11 Now it happened when the army of the Chaldeans had lifted *the siege* from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army,

12 that Jeremiah went out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin in order to take possession of *some* property there among the people.

13 While he was at the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah the son of Hananiah was there; and he arrested Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “You are going over to the Chaldeans!”

14 But Jeremiah said, “A lie! I am not going over to the Chaldeans”; yet he would not listen to him. So Irijah arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

15 Then the officials were angry at Jeremiah and beat him, and they put him in jail in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which they had made into the prison.

16 For Jeremiah had come into the dungeon, that is, the vaulted cell; and Jeremiah stayed there many days.

Jeremiah's Secret Meeting with Zedekiah

17 Now King Zedekiah sent and took him *out*; and in his palace the king secretly asked him and said, "Is there a word from the LORD?" And Jeremiah said, "There is!" Then he said, "You will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon!"

18 Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "*In what way* have I sinned against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison?"

19 Where then are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land'?

20 But now, please listen, O my lord the king; please let my petition come before you and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, that I may not die there."

21 Then King Zedekiah gave commandment, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guardhouse and gave him a loaf of bread daily from the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guardhouse.

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