

Jer. 37:1 ¶ 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.

Jer. 37:2 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.

In this chapter we move forward to the rule of Zedekiah, the youngest son of King Josiah. Nebuchadnezzar appointed him king when he took Coniah, also known as Jehoiachin, as a captive to Babylon. Point is made that Zedekiah did not heed the words of the LORD declared by Jeremiah.

Jer. 37:3 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.

Jer. 37:4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

Isn't it interesting that even though he refused to act in accordance with Jeremiah's message from God, Zedekiah still wanted Jeremiah to intercede for them with God in prayer. I am reminded that God had forbidden Jeremiah to pray for the people.

Jeremiah 7:16 "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."

Adam Clarke had an interesting thought regarding Zedekiah's thinking: "He was willing to hear a message from the Lord, provided it were according to his own mind."

Doesn't that seem to describe the mindset of much of the professing "church" today.

Point is made that at this time Jeremiah was a free man and allowed to move about as he chose.

Jer. 37:5 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.

Jer. 37:6 Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

These verses identify the situation in Jerusalem at the time of Zedekiah's request for intercession. The armies of Egypt were on the march toward Jerusalem from Egypt, and the Chaldeans decided to temporarily abandon their siege of Jerusalem to go out and meet them in battle. The LORD proceeds to give Jeremiah a message for King Zedekiah.

Important to note is that God did not need to hear Jeremiah intercede in prayer to know how to answer the king's messengers. God knows every word we utter; He even knows the thoughts and intents of our heart.

Genesis 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Psalms 139:4 "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Jer. 37:7 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.

Jer. 37:8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

Jer. 37:9 Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

Jer. 37:10 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.

God told Jeremiah to tell the king that the armies of Egypt which were on their way to help Judah would turn back to go home. Makes you think that they didn't even engage in battle. The message continues—The Chaldeans will come back to Jerusalem and will eventually destroy it with fire. Don't deceive yourselves into thinking otherwise. Even if you were able to defeat the Chaldeans and they only had a few wounded soldiers left, those soldiers would eventually burn the city down.

So often the deceit we fall prey to is our own self-deception—choosing to see things from the perspective of how we want things to be vs. how they really are. Burton Coffman referenced an interesting quote from J.A. Thompson: "This expression, 'Do not deceive yourselves,' is a translation of a remarkable Hebrew idiom, the literal meaning of which is, 'Do not cause your souls to rise (lift up).'" Our souls are often lifted up when things are going according to our own desires and purposes, but they are usually destined for great disappointment in light of reality.

Notice that Jeremiah was bold and unafraid in delivering God's message to the king even though he knew that the king would not like it. He was more concerned about obeying God than of how his popularity would be affected or of the possible angry reaction of the king and resulting danger to himself.

Jer. 37:11 ¶ And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

Jer. 37:12 Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

At this point we are told that after the Chaldeans left to meet the Egyptian armies, Jeremiah headed out of Jerusalem to go the land of Benjamin, the area he was from. Most of the translations indicate that he was going to check out the property he had bought or inherited.

Jer. 37:13 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.

Jer. 37:14 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.*

Jer. 37:15 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 headed out through the Benjamin Gate but was detained by a captain named Irijah and accused of defecting to the enemy. Jeremiah denied the charge, but the captain did not believe him and took him before the king's princes. These men evidently believed the captain's accusation and got angry at Jeremiah. They beat him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, the designated prison at that time.

An interesting side note: Irijah was the grandson of the false prophet Hananiah who died according to the judgment of God as declared through Jeremiah, so he was probably acting in revenge.

Jeremiah 28:15–17 "Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."

Jer. 37:16 When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

Jer. 37:17 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.

In looking at the Hebrew I think the CJB translation of v16 is best: *"The cistern had been made into a dungeon, and Yirmeyahu was put in one of its cells; there he remained for a long time."*

King Zedekiah eventually heard what had happened and had him secretly brought to see him. Why? He wanted to know if Jeremiah had any word from the LORD. Jeremiah immediately tells him that nothing has changed; you will be captured by the king of Babylon.

Again, Jeremiah is bold and confident in his faithfulness and obedience before God. Isn't it interesting, however, that the king is acting secretly; he doesn't want his people to know that he seeks the counsel of God's prophet.

Jer. 37:18 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?

Jer. 37:19 Where *are* now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

Jer. 37:20 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.

Jer. 37:21 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 then boldly asks the king what crime he had committed that justified his imprisonment. Beginning in v19 Jeremiah is basically saying: Your prophets have proven false, and I have been proved to be declaring God's truth.

Based on his innocence, Jeremiah pleads with the king not to send him back to the prison in Jonathan's house and to his death. Zedekiah doesn't release him, but he does change the location of his confinement and order that he be given a rationing of daily bread.