

## **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

### **Jeremiah Chapters 37-38**

**2/25/15**

#### **Bible Study Notes - Chapter 37**

##### **Jeremiah In Prison - Verses 1-21**

<sup>1</sup> Zedekiah son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he reigned in place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim. <sup>2</sup> Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the LORD had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet. <sup>3</sup> King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehukal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: "Please pray to the LORD our God for us." <sup>4</sup> Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison. <sup>5</sup> Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet: <sup>7</sup> "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 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.' <sup>8</sup> Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.' <sup>9</sup> "This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, 'The Babylonians will surely leave us.' They will not! <sup>10</sup> Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian<sup>[c]</sup> army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down." <sup>11</sup> After the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army, <sup>12</sup> Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there. <sup>13</sup> 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!" <sup>14</sup> "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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time. <sup>17</sup> Then King Zedekiah sent for him 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 delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." <sup>18</sup> Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "What crime have I committed against you or your attendants or this people, that you have put me in prison? <sup>19</sup> Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, 'The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land'? <sup>20</sup> 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." <sup>21</sup> King Zedekiah then gave orders for Jeremiah to be placed in the courtyard of the guard and given a loaf of 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.

**37:1-21** King Jehoiakim died on the way to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6). His son Jehoiachin was appointed king, but Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon three months later. Nebuchadnezzar then appointed Zedekiah as his vassal in Judah.

**37:2-3** King Zedekiah and his officials did not want to listen to Jeremiah's words, but they wanted the blessings of his prayers. They wanted a superficial religion that wouldn't cost anything. But God is not pleased with those who come to him only for what they can get rather than seeking to establish or deepen a relationship with him. We would not accept that kind of relationship with someone else, and we shouldn't expect God to accept it from us.

**37:5** When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 589 B.C., Pharaoh Hophra marched against him at Zedekiah's invitation. Jerusalem looked to Egypt for help in spite of Jeremiah's warnings. But the Egyptians were no help, for as soon as the Babylonians turned on them, they retreated. Jeremiah's warnings had been correct.

**37:17** Zedekiah teetered between surrender and resistance. Too frightened and weak to exercise authority, he asked Jeremiah to come secretly to the palace, perhaps hoping for some better news from God. Zedekiah was desperate; he wanted to hear a word from the Lord, but he feared the political ramifications of being caught talking to Jeremiah.

## ***Bible Study Notes - Chapter 38***

### ***Jeremiah Thrown Into a Cistern - Verses 1-13***

<sup>1</sup>Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah was telling all the people when he said, <sup>2</sup>"This is what the LORD says: 'Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague, but whoever goes over to the Babylonians will live. They will escape with their lives; they will live.'<sup>3</sup> And this is what the LORD says: 'This city will certainly be given into the hands of the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.'" <sup>4</sup> Then the officials said to the king, "This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin."<sup>5</sup> "He is in your hands," King Zedekiah answered. "The king can do nothing to oppose you."<sup>6</sup> So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. <sup>7</sup> But Ebed-Melek, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate, <sup>8</sup> Ebed-Melek went out of the palace and said to him, <sup>9</sup> "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city."<sup>10</sup> Then the king commanded Ebed-Melek the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies."<sup>11</sup> So Ebed-Melek took the men with him and went to a room under the treasury in the palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from there and let them down with ropes to Jeremiah in the

*cistern.<sup>12</sup> Ebed-Melek the Cushite said to Jeremiah, "Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes." Jeremiah did so,<sup>13</sup> and they pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard. +*

**38:4-5** No wonder Judah was in turmoil: The king agreed with everybody. He listened to Jeremiah (37:21); then he agreed Jeremiah should be killed (38:5); and finally he rescued Jeremiah (38:10). Jeremiah was not popular; his words undermined the morale of the army and the people. Zedekiah couldn't decide between public opinion and God's will. What is most influential in your life—what others say and think or what God wants?

**38:6** Officials put Jeremiah into an empty cistern to kill him. A cistern was a large cave or hole in the ground lined with rocks to collect rainwater. The bottom would have been dark, damp, and, in this case, full of mud. Jeremiah could drown, die of exposure, or starve to death in the cistern.

**38:6** Judah's leaders persecuted Jeremiah repeatedly for faithfully proclaiming God's messages. For 40 years of faithful ministry, he received no acclaim, no love, no popular following. He was beaten, jailed, threatened, and even forced to leave his homeland. Only the pagan Babylonians showed him any respect (39:11-12). God does not guarantee that his servants will escape persecution, even when they are faithful. But God does promise that he will be with them and will give them strength to endure (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). As you minister to others, recognize that your service is for God and not just for human approval. God rewards our faithfulness, but not always during our lifetime.

**38:7-8** The Benjamin Gate was one of Jerusalem's city gates where legal matters were handled. A palace official, Ebed-Melek, had access to the king. When Ebed-Melek heard of Jeremiah's plight, he went immediately to deal with the injustice.

**38:9-13** Ebed-Melek feared God more than people. He alone among the palace officials stood up against the murder plot. His obedience could have cost him his life. Because he obeyed, however, he was spared when Jerusalem fell (39:15-18). You can either go along with the crowd or speak up for God. When someone is treated unkindly or unjustly, for example, reach out to that person with God's love. You may be the only one who does. And, when you are being treated unkindly yourself, be sure to thank God when he sends an "Ebed-Melek" your way.

### ***Zedekiah Questions Jeremiah Again - Verses 14-28***

***<sup>14</sup> Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and had him brought to the third entrance to the temple of the LORD. "I am going to ask you something," the king said to Jeremiah. "Do not hide anything from me."<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I give you an answer, will you not kill me? Even if I did give you counsel, you would not listen to me."<sup>16</sup> But King Zedekiah swore this oath secretly 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 want to kill you."<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from them." <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> "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. <sup>21</sup> But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has revealed to me: <sup>22</sup> 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." <sup>23</sup> "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<sup>[e]</sup> be burned down." <sup>24</sup> Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Do not let anyone know about this conversation, or you may die. <sup>25</sup> If the officials hear that I talked with you, and they come to you and say, 'Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide it from us or we will kill you,' <sup>26</sup> then tell them, 'I was pleading with the king not to send me back to Jonathan's house to die there.'" <sup>27</sup> All the officials did come to Jeremiah and question him, and he told them everything the king had ordered him to say. So they said no more to him, for no one had heard his conversation with the king. <sup>28</sup> And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

**38:27** The officials wanted accurate information, but not God's truth. They wanted to use this information against God, his prophet, and the king. But Jeremiah told the officials only what the king ordered him to say. We must not withhold God's truth from others, but we should withhold information that will be used to bring evil to God's people.