

EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES
Part III: "God's Work to Fulfill His Word Through Even Persecuted Messengers"
(Ezekiel 12:1-16 with Jeremiah 38:1-39:7)

I. Introduction

- A. One of the big challenges in the Christian life is to be sent by God to give the Gospel or a message from the Word of God to a party, and to suffer persecution for it. The tendency for one who has been rebuffed this way is to vow to keep quiet and never let the truth out again!
- B. The believer never needs to feel intimidated from teaching the truth if the truth is what God wants him to speak. Case in point--the story of Jerusalem's King Zedekiah.

II. God's Work to Fulfill His Word Through Even Persecuted Messengers, Ez. 12; Jer. 38-39:

- A. The prophet Jeremiah who ministered in Jerusalem among the Israelites who were still not captured urged the people to submit to Babylonian invaders to be peacefully captured and not killed, Jer. 38:1-3.
- B. The princes of Judah who heard this message rejected the message, urging King Zedekiah of Judah to kill Jeremiah for instigating what was considered treason, Jer. 38:4. Weak Zedekiah let these men do what they willed to Jeremiah, letting them throw him into a muddy water cistern to die, Jer. 38:6.
- C. A black eunuch of the palace sided with Jeremiah, and asked King Zedekiah to let him rescue Jeremiah, and Zedekiah let him do so, Jer. 38:7-13.
- D. Zedekiah then sent for Jeremiah and asked for the truth about Babylon's invasion. Jeremiah responded that telling these facts was useless as Zedekiah would probably kill him anyway, v. 14-15.
- E. When Zedekiah took a private oath not to hurt Jeremiah, the prophet responded as follows: (1) if King Zedekiah submitted to the Babylonians, he would go into captivity and die with respect, v. 16-17. (2) But if he resisted in any way, Zedekiah would see his children and harem captured in pain with loss of life, and the city of Jerusalem razed to the ground with fire, v. 18-23.
- F. However, God knew that Zedekiah would not fully obey Jeremiah's words, so He sent a message to Ezekiel in Babylon to let the captives know about Zedekiah's demise (Ez. 12:1-16):
 - 1. God told Ezekiel that the people of Israel, including their king, were spiritually dull, 12:1-2.
 - 2. Accordingly, Ezekiel was to do another object lesson to show what would happen to the spiritually blind and dull of hearing in Jerusalem: they would try to escape by night through digging through a hole in the wall but fail, 12:3-8.
 - 3. In detail, then the Lord explained the meaning as it applied to King Zedekiah, Ez. 12:9-16:
 - a. God revealed that this object lesson pertained specifically to Jerusalem's ruler, 12:9-10.
 - b. This "prince" would try to escape by twilight through the wall in Jerusalem and sneak out through the Babylonian ramparts, avoiding captivity and death, Ez. 12:11-12a. **He would cover his eyes in disguise so that he could not see the ground with them**, v. 12b.
 - c. Accordingly, God would judge this man with captivity anyway for trying to do an "end run", 12:13.
 - d. For his effort to hide his eyes while sneaking out of the wall of Jerusalem, judgment would include a loss of **sight** for Zedekiah, Ez. 12:13b,14-16!
- G. The actual historical events are simply astounding: Zedekiah crept out through a gate area in the wall, trying to escape the Babylonians. They captured him at the River Jordan, and sent him to Nebuchadnezzar who killed his sons before him, put out his eyes, and sent him to Babylon, Jer. 39:1-7. The Babylonians then razed Jerusalem with fire, taking the city into captivity, Jer. 39:8-10.

Lesson: *Though he tried to escape the alternatives of obeying God and submitting to Babylonian invasion with blessing, or of rebelling directly and getting smashed, and that by sneaking out of the City of Jerusalem secretly, God's Word through the beleaguered Jeremiah and Ezekiel came true, and Zedekiah was captured AND blinded for rebellion!*

Application: *Whenever we know that God has commanded us to teach or preach a specific truth, don't fear persecution for doing so, for it will be backed up by God--period!*