

## THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH

### **XIV. God's Rescue Of Jeremiah And Ebed-Melech For Their Faithfulness**

**(Jeremiah 38:1-28; 39:15-18)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. God called Jeremiah to prophesy in Judah during its apostasy until God's judgment fell on the nation.
- B. Jeremiah's ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our era of spiritual decline. Such a calling can be marked by political opposition that seeks to cause God's servants to cease being able to do His work.
- C. Jeremiah 38:1-28 and 39:15-18 reports on God's rescue of Jeremiah and Ebed-Melech for their faithfulness, a passage that offers a lesson for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### **II. God's Rescue Of Jeremiah and Ebed-Melech For Their Faithfulness, Jeremiah 38:1-28; 39:15-18.**

- A. While Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the guard, he proclaimed God's message there, Jeremiah 38:1b-3.
- B. However, four ranking officials thought that his words that the city's people should go out and surrender to the besieging Babylonians to stay alive versus staying in the city only to die by the sword, famine or disease was undermining the morale of the soldiers in the courtyard of the guard, all to the harm of the people, v. 1a, 4c.
- C. Thus, these officials went to king Zedekiah and advised him to have Jeremiah put to death, Jeremiah 38:4a, b.
- D. Weak-willed Zedekiah permitted them to do what they wanted, so they arrested Jeremiah and put him in the cistern in the courtyard of the guard likely to punish him in front of the guards in order to rebuild the morale of the soldiers that Jeremiah had allegedly undermined, Jer. 38:5-6a. The cistern was meant to collect rainwater, but it was only coated with a layer of mud at its bottom, so Jeremiah sank down in the mud, Jeremiah 38:6b.
- E. However, Ebed-Melech, a Cushite from modern southern Egypt, Sudan and northern Ethiopia who served as an official in the palace, heard of Jeremiah's plight and went to Zedekiah to appeal for his life, Jer. 38:7-8 (Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1183). Ebed-Melech told the king that the officials had acted wickedly in putting Jeremiah in the cistern, that he would starve there when all of the bread of the city was gone, Jeremiah 38:9.
- F. The vacillating king then directed Ebed-Melech to take thirty men with him and lift Jeremiah up out of the cistern before he died, Jeremiah 38:10. Ebed-Melech obtained some old rags and clothes and let them down with two ropes to Jeremiah, telling him to put the rags and clothes under his armpits to shield them from the force created by the ropes under his arms when the men tried to pull him up out of the sticky mire, Jeremiah 38:11-12b. Jeremiah heeded Ebed-Melech's words, the men pulled the prophet up out of the cistern, and Jeremiah then stayed in the courtyard of the guard where he had earlier been assigned, Jeremiah 38:12c-13.
- G. Zedekiah then had Jeremiah brought to the temple so he could privately seek Jeremiah's advice, Jer. 38:14. Jeremiah doubted Zedekiah's intent, for the king had let the officials put him in the cistern, so Jeremiah told Zedekiah that he feared that the king might kill him or not heed him if he gave him God's message, v. 15.
- H. Zedekiah gave an oath in the Lord's name not to kill Jeremiah or hand him over to those who wanted to kill him, so Jeremiah repeated his initial message: if the king surrendered to Babylon, his life would be spared and the city not burned, but if not, the city would be taken and burned, and Zedekiah would not escape, v. 16-18.
- I. The king admitted to Jeremiah that if he surrendered, he feared the Jews in Babylon would mistreat him, but Jeremiah assured him that the Babylonians would not turn him over to them, but that if he did not surrender, things would go very badly for the king, his family, his courtiers and the city of Jerusalem, Jeremiah 38:19-23.
- J. Zedekiah knew that if the officials who had opposed Jeremiah learned of this conversation where Jeremiah had told the *king to surrender* to Babylon, *they would kill Jeremiah*, Jer. 38:24. Thus, Zedekiah told him that if the officials asked him what he had discussed with the king, Jeremiah was to report that he had pleaded with the king not to send him back to the cistern of Jonathan where he was first imprisoned, what Jeremiah had done back in Jeremiah 37:20 (Jer. 38:25-26). The officials did ask Jeremiah about his words with the king, so he told them what the king had told him to say, reporting on a former conversation he had had with Zedekiah but keeping the latest conversation in confidence, so the officials stopped speaking with him, Jeremiah 38:27.
- K. Jeremiah thus stayed in the courtyard of the guard until the city finally fell to the Babylonians, Jeremiah 38:28.
- L. Meanwhile, God had Jeremiah tell Ebed-Melech that because he had trusted in the Lord as evidenced by his deliverance of Jeremiah from the cistern, God would spare his life in the Babylonian invasion, Jer. 39:15-18.

**Lesson: Amid life-threatening threats to Jeremiah from Judah's officials or to Ebed-Melech from the invading Babylonian army, God delivered both men from death as a reward for their faithfulness to Him.**

**Application: May we trust and obey the Lord above fears for our own safety in perilous times to enjoy His blessing.**