



Lesson 11 May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Jeremiah: The Suffering Preacher of Doom

Study Scripture – Jeremiah 38:14-23

Background Scripture – Jeremiah 38:14-23

### Key Verse:

*Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?*

**Jeremiah 38:15**

Everybody has a different personality. People are not all the same and because of that they do things differently. Some are kind, some are greedy, some will give away everything that they have, and some will always do whatever is best for them alone. They do not seriously care about others. And what is bad about this is that they are quite prepared to disobey God who tells us that we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

The people of Judah were unfortunate people for they had a King named Zedekiah who had been put on the throne by the Babylonians who had captured the nation of Judah. They had dragged the man who was king at the time and his son to Babylon and put them in captivity. This man that was now appointed as King was a double minded man. This means that he was unstable in what he did. Even though he knew the prophecy that the prophet Jeremiah had given to him, he kept changing his mind and doing the wrong thing.

When the rulers of the nation of Judah continued to behave badly and had been so disobedient that God was tired of their bad behaviour, God told the prophet Jeremiah to tell the rulers and people He would destroy the city of Jerusalem, destroy the beautiful Temple built by Solomon, and have the Babylonians drag all of them off into captivity.

This was very bad behaviour. The job of the King was to represent God and be His steward or manager of affairs on Earth. He and other rulers had a great responsibility for it was their job to protect people and not abuse them or use them for their own selfish interests. Their job was to stop people that have bad ideas about what needed to be done. The King and rulers had been put in power by God to ensure that God's will was done for the benefit of the people. But instead of that when Jeremiah the prophet warned them that they should not try to fight the king of Babylon who had captured them before anyway, but should put themselves under that King's control, the King and the rulers agreed that they should arrest Jeremiah and throw him into a cistern that was full of mud and all kind of insects. The prophet of God had no food, no water, and no protective clothing and so he was bound to die.

This was a direct attack on God and what God wanted.

This was very bad because rulers are supposed to protect the people and to do what God wanted. In the same way Parents are supposed to protect their children and make sure they are healthy. Teachers, employers, friends, and family members are supposed to protect the people

over which they have responsibility. Many times they fail to do this and when they fail to live up to their responsibility God does not like it.

But God provided help for the prophet Jeremiah even though the unstable King and the evil and greedy princes had tried to send the prophet to his doom. One of the people who served the King who came from Ethiopia named Ebed-Melech went to the King and told him that what they had done to Jeremiah was evil. He asked permission to take Jeremiah out of the cistern that they had thrown him in. This was a very brave man who did something really brave because he knew that the King had been GUILTY in allowing the princes to throw Jeremiah into this cistern where he would die. Surprisingly the king agreed even though he had been responsible for Jeremiah being put in this mud filled cistern where he knew that Jeremiah would have died. All the King had to do was to stand up to the evildoers and say no to imprisoning the prophet. He really did not have to be afraid of them for he was King, and he must have known the Babylonians would not tolerate that kind of behaviour from the princes. As soon as Jeremiah came out of the cistern King Zedekiah came to him and asked him to tell him what God wanted. He very well knew what God wanted for Jeremiah had told him and other rulers over and over again to surrender to the king of Babylon and not try to fight them. But Zedekiah seems to have wanted to try to see if Jeremiah would get God to change His mind. But when Jeremiah met the king in secret and the king asked him what God really wanted, Jeremiah hesitated answering before the King promised not to throw him back into the cistern where he would die. The King agreed and then Jeremiah told him the plain truth which was to not try to fight the king of Babylon. If he did not fight the city of Jerusalem would be spared, the Temple would not be destroyed, the houses would not be burned down, he would not be killed, and people would not be taken as slaves into Babylon. But if he did not listen to what God said Jerusalem would be burned down and the Temple would be destroyed, and he and all the people would be taken as slaves into Babylon. God would not change his mind about what was to happen.

He did not need to fear that people would mock him for surrendering. The king of Babylon would protect him. If he disobeyed God even the women in the city of Jerusalem and the country who would be captured by the Babylonian army would laugh at him. Zedekiah was very afraid that people would laugh at him. But even though he was afraid of this he would still not listen to God telling him that if he did what was right nobody would laugh at him.

The prophet Jeremiah therefore suffered for no matter what he tried to do he could not persuade King Zedekiah to change his mind and obey God, and protect the people of the city, and the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in Jerusalem.

Only God knows why King Zedekiah and other rulers were so foolish and were so disobedient. The lesson for us is that we are not to be disobedient to the word of God. We should believe what God tells us what happens to us. When we are disobedient and then repent God will accept us without reproaching us and cursing us for what we have done wrong.

When we are obedient to God and people abuse us, God will send someone who is kind and compassionate like the servant of the nation named Ebed-Melech. God will never forget us. When we disobey God, we are doing something awful. It does not matter whether you are an individual person or whether you are a nation.



The Lesson really reminds us that when you do the right thing you can be dumped on for doing this right thing. But if you are faithful like Jeremiah God will give you the ability to endure things that you never thought you would be able to endure.

God will do marvelous and wonderful things in your life and your life will be brighter and better than you can even dream about or imagine.

So just obey God all the time and keep praying to Him to help you for He will help you at the right time whenever you pray to Him.

