

Jeremiah Ch 37–38 • “Pray Now to the Lord Our God”

- 37v1 These chapters take place during the reign of Zedekiah – after Coniah removed in 597BC (so roughly 18 years after Ch 36).
- v2 Whole nation rejecting God’s word!
- v3 Actually second time Zedekiah calls for Jeremiah; first time in Ch 21. Different request this time – ask OUR God to pray (cf “your” or “the”). But Zedekiah coming from place of desperation not repentance.
- v4-5 “Not yet imprisoned” = before Ch 32. Summer of 588BC (Egypt attacks).
- v6-10 God’s answer: Egypt isn’t going to defeat Babylonians. Judgment coming. Not fighting against Babylon; fighting against God!
- v11-12 Not clear what property this is, but can’t be land purchased in Ch 32.
- v13 Jeremiah arrested either for desertion or treason or both. (J. had already counseled Jerusalem to surrender to Babylon @ Ch 21)
- v14-15 These are different “princes” than Ch 36. That group was deported in 597BC. Jeremiah apparently doesn’t have (m)any allies in the new regime.
- v16-17 Next interaction between Jeremiah & Zedekiah happens while J. in captivity; Zedekiah wants to know what the prophet has heard from God.
- v18-19 Jeremiah turns question around: why am I imprisoned for speaking truth? And why are prophets who obviously don’t hear from God still free?
- v20 Jeremiah in his 60s at this point. Imprisonment could easily be fatal.
- v21 This is likely where Jeremiah was at beginning of Ch 32 (buys cousin’s land)
- 38v1-3 Even in custody, Jeremiah still preaching and still provoking reactions. “Surrender or die” not popular message among Jerusalem’s leaders.
- v4 We don’t know a lot about who these men are, but we do have archeological evidence (“Lachish Letters”) that has similar language.
- v5-6 Zedekiah tries not to take sides (cf Pontius Pilate). Kicks decision back to leaders who elect to drop Jeremiah down a well (cf Joseph).
- v7-9 Ebed = slave; Melech = king. Could be name or job description. Interesting Gentile not eligible to convert to Judaism (Deut 23:1) is only one to come to Jeremiah’s defense.
- v10 Zedekiah swings back other way (weak). 30 people not needed to lift;

- 38v11-12 30 people needed in case the encounter resistance.
Speaks to condition Jeremiah must have been in (skin & bones) that lifting with rope under arms would be likely to injure him.
- v13 Nothing recorded about any resistance encountered. Either didn't happen or was easily dealt with.
- v14 Jeremiah still confined but in a better situation (and able to have another conversation with Zedekiah who wants an update from the Lord).
- v15 Jeremiah points out he's in a no-win situation. If he speaks the truth, history shows Zedekiah WON'T listen to it and WILL punish Jeremiah for saying it.
- v16 Zedekiah gives Jeremiah immunity (w/o committing to following counsel). He's still trying to have it both ways.
- v17-18 Same answer Jeremiah (God) gave in 38v1-3; same answer as Ch 21.
- v19-20 Jeremiah counsels: "Follow God and live!" But Zedekiah's fear of man is greater than his fear of the Lord.
- v21-22 Part of humiliation of a conquered king would be the loss of his harem. Jeremiah responding to Zedekiah's fear by prophesying that he'll be just as abused if he's conquered than if he surrenders.
- Note: v22 written in poetic meter typically used for funeral dirges.
God is trying to convey message both in what saying and how saying it.*
- v23 Challenging Zedekiah to consider the fate of others – not just himself. But there's no penetrating Zedekiah's fear.
- v24 Zed adds condition to his promise to not kill Jeremiah: don't tell anyone!
- v25-26 Zed: if princes ask what we talked about, lie!
- v27-28 Interrogation happens; Jeremiah follows the script.
Is this a lie? Or just being selective with the truth?
If it's a lie, it just reminds us that Jeremiah is a flawed human who struggles!
- Application *But even in his struggles, Jeremiah surrenders to God in the end.
Zedekiah and Jeremiah both wrestled with fear but made different choices.
The choices they make reflect differing views on who God is.
Choosing to follow God when we agree with Him is easy.
Choosing to follow God when it costs is worship!
Choosing to believe God despite our feelings is worship!*

Why is Israel (northern kingdom) mentioned? Helps if we understand the prophecies not “against” Israel but rather “concerning” Israel — the example Judah did not follow, but also the restoration all 12 tribes share in.

- v3 Write down prophecies – harder to ignore! God giving Judah every chance! Scroll probably papyrus (burned later); typically 10” wide x 30’ long.
- v4 Baruch is person of standing in own right: grandfather was leader w Josiah; brother is high official during reign of Zedekiah.
- v5-6 Not so much “confined” as “constrained” or restricted. Not imprisoned yet. But not free to enter the temple courtyard. Unclean? Or unpopular (Ch 7)?
- v7-9 Fast day – not part of a Mosaic feast. Probably in response to current events. Most likely the fall of Ashekelon (Babylonians advancing; Jerusalem next). Interesting the fast day doesn’t come around for a year – Jeremiah waited.
- v10 Shaphan = scribe and priest (cf 2 Kings 22). 3 sons and 2 grandsons we know were loyal to Jeremiah.
- v11-13 Faithful sons of men who served under Josiah; sympathetic to Jeremiah.
- v14-16 They needed to tell Jehoiakim but at the same time dreaded consequences. No doubt remembered what happened to Uriah (Ch 26). But also remembered when Hilkiah brought the book of the Law to Josiah.
- v17-18 They wanted to make sure these were Jeremiah’s words and not Baruch’s.
- v19-20 Hid scroll anticipating negative reaction from Johoiakim (cf Uriah / Ch 26).
- v21-22a Winter quarters – probably same building, different section (easier to heat).
- v22b-24 Purpose of writing the scroll was to present opportunity to repent. Jehoiakim ran in the opposite direction from Josiah (cf 2 Kings 22).
- v25-26 The Lord hid them – but the princes told them to hide. God does supernatural things thru natural means. Also eg of providence ☐

“The Providence of God is a friend who holds my hand through the dark corridors of life and history” (Tim Brown)
- v27-28 Another parallel: Moses smashing tablets! Reminder of the lengths God takes to preserve his Word.
- v29-31 Jehoiachin (son) reigned for 3 mos but the dynasty ends after that (cf Ch 22). Body goes unburied: rabbinical tradition says Nebuchadnezzar offered to trade Jerusalem for Jehoiakim. Sanhedrin agreed but Jehoiakim died in custody before he could be handed over, so Nebuchadnezzar settled for parading corpse thru Judah in a cart shaped like a donkey (Jer 22:19).

Application *Our sin affects others!*

Providence is real, but we have an opportunity to cooperate or resist.

God uses us in our obedience – even when we don't see the point!