

Fact Sheet for **“Where Will You Stand with God?”**
Jeremiah 37-39

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We have come to a turning point in the book of Jeremiah. We have come to the fall of Jerusalem. As we pick our way through chapters 37, 38 and 39 we will be reminded of those truths and life lessons we've seen earlier in the book. We will be reminded of His sovereignty over everyone who lives on this planet. We will see His faithfulness to those who put their trust in Him. His character qualities of justice as well as mercy will be on display. We will recognize that His time frame can be much different than our own. And we will be challenged to be fully committed to Him.

Jeremiah had been prophesying since the 13th year of Josiah, during the reign of Jehoiakim, and now coming to the end of Zedekiah's reign (1:1-3). We don't really get a sense of how long this was until we stop and think about it. It was nearly 41 years. Jeremiah has had the same message all during this time. Babylon would conquer Judah. Jerusalem would be burnt. The Jewish people would be taken captive to Babylon and would experience God's protection. Those who fought against the invaders and stayed in Jerusalem would die. 41 years is half a lifetime. 41 years ago was 1978. Helen and I had been married for 2 years, and had no children. I graduated from Seminary and we were preparing to be missionaries in Liberia. Jimmy Carter was president. There were no PCs, internet, or cell phones. Imagine if Jeremiah had started his ministry in 1978, had prophesied until today, and what he predicted had not yet transpired. And remember... he didn't have a message people liked. If Jeremiah was prophesying today how would people react to him? *“Jeremiah, it has been 41 years already and still what you predicted has not come about. We don't believe you! Go away.”*

However, back in Judah's day the threat of Jerusalem being taken was finally heating up. Zedekiah the king was getting rattled, but still not enough to believe Jeremiah. As you will see, Zedekiah left much to be desired in a king.

Read Jeremiah 37:1-3.

Zedekiah wasn't turning to God. He was grasping at straws. Jerusalem had a brief respite from Nebuchadnezzar's siege. Egypt had appeared on the scene briefly to help Judah and fight against the Babylonians. But Nebuchadnezzar's army would soon be back. Listen to the LORD's words. *Read Jeremiah 37:9-10.*

Zedekiah was really fighting against God, not the Babylonians. During this brief respite from the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem Jeremiah attempted to leave the city to take care of some personal business in his hometown. But he was arrested, charged with deserting to the Babylonians, and imprisoned. Zedekiah sent for him. *Read Jeremiah 37:16-19.*

Then Jeremiah asked Zedekiah not to send him back to the prison. So Zedekiah committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard in the royal palace. Jeremiah was now about 60 years old. While there Jeremiah had the same message. Four high-ranking officials who didn't like his ongoing message sought to put him to death and presented their request to Zedekiah. Here is how the king responded. *Read Jeremiah 38:5-6.*

This was essentially a death sentence. An Ethiopian who served Zedekiah named Ebed-melech (literally “the servant of the king”) petitioned Zedekiah to help Jeremiah, and the king agreed. They lifted Jeremiah out of the cistern, but he remained in the court of the guard. God would have a message of protection for this Ethiopian. *Read Jeremiah 39:15-18.*

While Jeremiah was in the court of the guard Zedekiah would send once more for him. Here is the gist of that conversation. *Read Jeremiah 38:14-18.*

I am again reminded of 2 Peter 3:9.

ESV 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Even though God knew he wouldn't, at that moment Zedekiah could have made a choice to save the city of Jerusalem from destruction, but he was more afraid for his own skin. And listen of who he was afraid of. *Read Jeremiah 38:19.* But Jeremiah reiterated the LORD's message... surrender and live... don't surrender and you will not escape. Zedekiah was also afraid of his own officials (38:25-26).

Now Jerusalem would finally fall (39:1-2).

Zedekiah did not surrender but fled with some officials and officers, and was caught (39:5-10).

Just what God said would happen did happen. And God was faithful to Jeremiah.

Then Nebuchadnezzar gave this command concerning Jeremiah...

Jeremiah 39:12

¹² "Take him, look after him well, and do him no harm, but deal with him as he tells you."

God protected Jeremiah. He protected those who surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. He protected Ebed-melech.

God sovereignly brought about Jerusalem's destruction. He was sovereign over Judah, but also over Nebuchadnezzar.

God was still offering His mercy until the very end.

God is still the same today.

Remember that God's time frame is different than ours.

ESV Job 14:2 He (*man*) comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.

ESV 1 Timothy 1:17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Never give up! Always keep your trust in Him. Keep on living for Him.

This is the best and greatest path for your future.