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Jer 38-39

Chapter 38 is a continuation of the previous chapter in the reign of Zedekiah, at which time Jeremiah still went among the people for he had not been imprisoned yet. Jer. 37:4

Then as Jeremiah went out to Anathoth he was accused of treason, leading to his being beat and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for they had made it a prison. Jer. 37:15

Zedekiah then asked Jeremiah secretly if there was a word from the Lord, only to find out that the message was the same, judgment and captivity.

So he granted the prophet's request not to be returned to Jonathan's prison house and he was transferred to the court of the prison. Jer. 37:21

The accounts of chapter 37 and 38 are not of the same event as some believe but different from each other, though they have similarities, there are too many differences to make them the same.

38:1-6 **The response of the princes to the message of Jeremiah was to put him to death.**

38:1 *The names of the men petitioning the king.*

- 1) Shephatiah the son of Mattan.
- 2) Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, not the governor after the conquest. Jer. 39:14.
* Pashhur not the one who put Jeremiah in the stocks but the one sent to inquire of the Lord. Jer. 21:1
- 3) Jucal the son of Shelemiah. Jer. 37:3
- 4) Pashhur the son of Malchiah is not the one who resisted Jeremiah earlier in chapter 20 but the one in twenty-one. Jer. 21:1
- 5) All four heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, which took place before the imprisonment of Jeremiah but he still had people visit him in confinement and warn them! Jer. 37:15, 21

38:2-3 *The nature of the message the men were reporting to the king.*

- 1) Yahweh had revealed to Jeremiah that whoever remained in this city would die. Vs. 2a-b
- 2) The three-fold judgment was by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. Vs. 2a-b-d
* Jer. 14:12; 21:7, 9, 24, 10; 27:8

- 3) The person who would go over to the Chaldeans would live; his life would be as a prize to him in war. Vs. 2e-g
- 4) The city would be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, they would certainly take it. Vs. 3
- 5) The message was prefaced with, "Thus says the LORD".
 - * The message was consistent from the beginning. Jer. 21:9; 34:2, 22; 37:6-10, 16-17; 38:1-3; 22-23

38:4 *The princes expressed their request to the king.*

- 1) They pleaded that Jeremiah should be put to death, "Please, let this man be put to death". Vs. 4a-c
 - * They were certainly upset that Jeremiah had been transferred from the house of Jonathan to the court of the prison!
- 2) The reason was that Jeremiah was weakening the hands of the men of war and the people in the city, he was discouraging and demoralizing the soldiers and the people, an act of treason. Vs. 4d-f
- 3) They declared that Jeremiah was seeking the benefit of the people but their harm. Vs. 4g-h

- * Similar word to his are found in a charge in Lachish Letter 6 against certain leaders in Jerusalem. The letter ,ostracon, was from an outpost captain to Yaosh, commander at Lachis: "And behold the words of the officials are not good, but only to weaken your hands and to slacken the hands of the men who are informed about them". (Beacon:615)

38:5-6 *Jeremiah is imprisoned.*

- 1) Zedekiah the king was a weak and vacillating king by his own words, he said to the princes, "Look, he is in your hand. For the king can do nothing against you." Vs. 5
 - a) He dared not resist the princes.
 - b) He was not the ruler in reality.
- 2) The men put Jeremiah in prison. Vs. 6
 - a) They took Jeremiah and cast, literally threw him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son. Vs. 6a
 - 1)) This was a cistern that collected water for the summer season during the winter rains.
 - 2)) Without doubt as a form of his execution, allowing him to starve to death! Ps. 69:14

- * He had been put in the stocks, beat and imprisoned! Jer. 20:2; 37:15
- b) The location was in the court of the prison, distinct from the house of Jonathan. Vs. 6b. 37:15
- c) They let Jeremiah down with ropes, implying that it was very deep. Vs. 6c
- d) The dungeon had no water, but mire. Vs. 6d-e
- e) The prophet Jeremiah sank in the mire. Vs. 6f

38:7-13 *Jeremiah is rescued from prison.*

38:7-9 God's instrument was an Ethiopian. Vs. 7

- 1) The Ethiopian heard of the injustice. Vs. 7
 - a) His name was Ebed-Melech which means "servant of the king". Vs. 7a
 - b) He was a one of the eunuchs, who was in the king's house. Vs. 7b-c
 - 1)) The title eunuchs "saris" could refer to one being castrated, a eunuch and if so he would have been over the kings harem.
 - 2)) The title can also mean and official. Jer. 29:2
 - * Remember Potiphar bore this title and was married. Gen. 39:1

- c) He heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon at the time when the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin, conducting some administrative justice at the gate. Vs. 7d-e
 - * The irony being that he had been unjust to Jeremiah.
- 2) The Ethiopian interceded for Jeremiah to the kings. Vs. 8-9
 - a) Ebed-Melech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king. Vs. 8
 - b) He confronted the king with the evil done to Jeremiah by these men, which was a dangerous things. Vs. 9a-b
 - c) He informed the king that they had cast into the dungeon. Vs. 9c
 - * Without any doubt Zedekiah already knew the peril of Jeremiah, he had given him over the evil men!
 - d) He told the king that Jeremiah most likely would die from hunger in the dungeon because there was no more bread in the city. Vs. 9d-e

38:10-13 The king commanded Jeremiah to be rescued.

- 1) Zedekiah commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian to take thirty men with him, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies. Vs. 10

- a) The number of men was for protection in case of resistance.
* The LXX has three but the MT thirty, three would not be sufficient to pull a man out of mud waist deep, let alone up to his chest!
- b) The number was also for pulling Jeremiah out, due to the amount of suction by the mud on the body of Jeremiah.
- 2) Ebed-Melech then went to rescue Jeremiah. Vs. 11
- a) He first took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, the wardrobe storeroom and took from there old clothes and old rags. Vs. 11a-b
- b) They then let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Vs. 11c
- 3) Then Ebed-Melech gave to Jeremiah instructions. Vs. 12-13
- a) The Ethiopian told Jeremiah, "Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes." Vs. 12a-c
- b) And Jeremiah did so. Vs. 12d
- c) They pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. Vs. 13a
* Ps. 18:16, 40:2

- d) Then Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison. Vs. 12b

38:14-23 *Zedekiah sought a private meeting with Jeremiah.*

38:14-16 Jeremiah is brought to Zedekiah.

- 1) Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him. at the third entrance of the house of the LORD. Vs. 14a
- a) There was an entrance for the public.
b) There was an entrance for the priest.
c) There was an private entrance for the king. 2Kings 16:18
- 2) Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me." Vs. 14b
* This is the second time Zedekiah meets secretly with Jeremiah, revealing his distrust of the princes. Jer. 27:17
- 3) Jeremiah responded to Zedekiah in two ways. Vs. 15
- a) "If I declare it to you, will you not put me to death?"
b) "And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."
- 4) Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying. Vs. 16
- a) He swore by a common oath, "As the LORD lives who made our very souls." Vs. 16c-d

- b) He promised two things, He would not put Jeremiah to death, nor would he give him into the hand of the men who sought his life. Vs. 16e-f
hand. Vs. 18d

38:17-23 The response of Zedekiah.

- 1) The message of Jeremiah had not changed. Vs. 17-18
- a) The benefit of obedience came first.
- 1)) The word was of Divine authority, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel.’ Vs. 17a-c
 - 2)) If he surrendered to the king of Babylon’s princes, his soul would live.
 - 2)) The city would not be burned with fire. Jer. 21:10; 32:29; 34:2, 22; 37:8, 10; 38:2-3, 23
 - 3)) He and his house would live.
- b) The consequences came second. Vs. 18
- 1)) But if he did not surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then this city would be given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Vs. 18a-b
 - 2)) They would burn it with fire. Vs. 18c
 - 3)) He would not escape from their hand. Vs. 18d

- 2) The king's objections are met with a call to obey. Vs. 19-20
- a) Zedekiah told Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me.” Vs. 19
* Fear of man brings a snare... Prov. 29:25
- b) Jeremiah assured Zedekiah that would not happen, “They shall not deliver you. Please, obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live. Vs. 20
* The vision of the figs. Jer. 24
- 3) Jeremiah warned him through a prophecy if he disobeyed. Vs. 21-22
- a) Jeremiah said, “But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the LORD has shown me:” Vs. 21
- b) All the women who are left in the king of Judah's house, his harem would be surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes. Vs. 22a-b
* The custom of the day was for the conquering king to take all of the king's wives and harem and go into them sexually to demonstrate the complete conquest. 2Sam. 16:21-22

- c) Those women would say: “Your close friends, literally “men of your peace” have set upon you And prevailed against you; Your feet have sunk in the mire, And they have turned away again.” Vs. 22c-f
- 1)) In other words for trusting those close to him instead of God and his prophet for they had deserted him, so he had sealed his own death, as it would have been for Jeremiah in the cistern of mud. Jer. 32:1-2
- 2)) Similar to Obediah. Vs. 7
- 4) Zedekiah seals his families death. Vs 23
- a) They would surrender all his wives and children to the Chaldeans. Vs. 23a
- b) He would not escape from their hand, but would be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon. Vs. 23b-c
- c) He would cause this city to be burned with fire. Vs. 23d

38:24-28 *The council of Zedekiah to Jeremiah.*

- 1) Zedekiah told Jeremiah not to let anyone know of their conversation and he would not die. Vs. 24
- 2) Zedekiah feared his princes would hear of his conversation with Jeremiah. Vs. 25-26

- a) He said, “If the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, `Declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you; do not hide it from us, and we will not put you to death.” Vs. 25
- b) He said, “Then you shall say to them, `I presented my request before the king, that he would not make me return to Jonathan's house to die there.” Vs. 26
- 3) All the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him, as the king had suspected and he replied as the king advised him. Vs. 27
- a) Some have a hard time with the lie in our text.
- b) The statement was true. Jer. 37:20
- c) The answer depended on human life, his own and possibly the kings.
- d) The event also reveals the humanity of the prophet.
- 4) Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And he was there when Jerusalem was taken. Vs. 28
- a) The prophet had been true to forty years of ministry. Jer. 1:4-10
- b) Jeremiah expresses the phrase “declares the Lord” more than any

other prophet in the Old Testament, 176 times. (Huey Jr.:340)

- c) Chapter 37-38 stress the repeated opportunity God gives for people to repent and experience deliverance, yet the nature of man is to reject the offer!

39:1-18 The fall of Jerusalem.

39:1-10 *The details of the fall.*

39:1-3 The date of the fall.

- 1) The city fell in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem, and besieged it, January of 588 B. C. Vs. 1
* These events are supplemented for us, telling us it was on the tenth day of the month. Jer. 52:4-16; Ezk. 24:1; 2Kings 25:1-12; 2Chron. 36:11-12
- 2) Eighteen months later, on the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated, July of 586 B. C. Vs. 2
* Some have confused thinking this chapter contradicts the account of the next one, while they are complementary and well as supplementary.

- 3) The authority of the city was established. Vs 3

- a) Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate: Vs. 3
- 1)) Nergal-Sharezer, means “prince of fire” and he is identified with Neriglissar, who succeeded Amel-Marduk, the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar in 562-560 B. C. by having him murdered
 - 2)) Samgar-Nebo, means “sword of Nebo”, one of the princes or generals of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
* Though some believe it should be read as a district meaning that Nergal protects the king of Shamgar, a district in Babylon.
 - 3)) Sarsechim, means “prince of the eunuchs” a ruler or general of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 4)) Rabsaris is a title for a high ranking officer, the chief of the eunuchs.
 - 5)) Nergal-Sarezer, same as the first mentioned.
 - 6)) Rabmag, is another title the chief magic, astrologer or soothsayer.
 - 7)) The rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

* This took place a month later.
2Kings 25:8

38:4-8 The flight and pursuit of Zedekiah.

- 1) Zedekiah and all the men of war seeing them fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king's garden, located by the gate between the two walls. And he went out by way of the plain. Vs. 4
 - a) Some believe it was near the Pool of Siloam, through the fountain gate out to the Kidron Valley. Neh. 3:15; 2:14; 12:37
 - b) The two walls were the two city walls, the original and the extended one.
 - c) Ezekiel had prophesied and acted out the escape. Ezk. 12:12-13

39:5-7 The pursuit of Zedekiah.

- 1) The Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him. Vs. 5
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar was not present at the siege but at his headquarters in Riblah. About 150 miles north of Jerusalem. 2Kings 23:33; 25:6

- b) North of the Dead Sea that extended to the head of head of the gulf of Aqaba.
 - b) Riblah was the ancient Syrian town on the Orontes River about ten miles south of Kadeh, at the crossing of the highways between Egypt and Mesopotamia, a very strategic location militarily as Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters.
 - c) Riblah also had served as the headquarters of Pharaoh Necho in 609 in his campaign to assist Assyria against Babylon. 2Kings 23:33
 - d) Hamah is the modern city of Hama in Syria.
- 2) Nebuchadnezzar then killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah and the nobles of Judah. Vs. 6
 - 3) Nebuchadnezzar put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. Vs. 7
 - a) This cruel punishment is recorded in the Hammurabi Code.
 - b) This fulfilled two prophecies, he would see Nebuchadnezzar then taken captive to Babylon and would die there. Jer. 32:4-5; 34:3; Ezk. 12:13

39:8-10 The destruction of the city and the people.

- 1) And the Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Vs. 8
 - a) One month after the city fell. 2Kings 25:8
 - b) The temple was also burned. Jer. 52:13; 2Kings 25:9
- 2) Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained. Vs. 9
 - a) His name means “he who has given seed”.
 - b) He was the captain of the guard, the body guard or literally “the chief butcher”, the field marshal who was the chief executioner.
 - b) He was responsible for rounding up all who remained in the city to be carried off to Babylon.
- 3) But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah the poor people, who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time. Vs. 10

* The benefit being the land would not be desolate and overseen by them!

39:11-14 *The command regarding Jeremiah.*

- * Some have found conflict with this account and the one in the next chapter but a close reading reveals that Jeremiah was set free and in the mix up was taken as a captive to the rallying place of Ramah and when recognized by Nebuzaradan, Jeremiah was released. Jer. 40:1-6
- 1) Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon personally gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard. Vs. 11
 - 2) Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you. Vs. 12
 - a) Talk about God’s faithfulness.
 - b) Talk about the impossible.
 - c) With out any doubt Nebuchadnezzar had heard about Jeremiah from Daniel and Ezekiel.
 - 3) The officers of Nebuchadnezzar were sent to take Jeremiah from the prison. Vs. 13

* Jer. 38:28

 - a) So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent the men. Vs. 13a
 - b) The men were Nebushasban, Rabsaris, Nergal-Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's chief officers. Vs. 13b-e

- 4) These men in turn sent someone to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he dwelt among the people. Vs. 14
- a) Shaphan was an important official under Josiah and involved in finding the scroll. 2Kings 22:2-30
- b) Ahikam was Jeremiah's friend. Jer. 26:24
- c) Jeremiah stand for the faithful servant who is and Ebed-Melech, while Zedekiah for unfaithfulness, weak and vacillating!

39:15-18 *God's blessing to Ebed-Melech.*

- 1) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison. Vs. 15
- * Once again the chronology is not the focus, being an Easton book, it is supplying supplementary information to be placed into the narrative. Jer. 38:13, 28
- 2) Yahweh told Jeremiah to go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian about the judgment of the city. Vs. 16c-d
- a) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, the One speaking was the

Captain of the armies of heaven and the God of Israel. Vs. 16c-d

- b) He was to know, "Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be performed in that day before you." Vs. 16e-f
- 3) Yahweh would protect the Ethiopian, "But I will deliver you in that day," says the LORD, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid." Vs. 17
- 4) Yahweh had seen that he trusted in Him, "For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me," says the LORD." Vs. 18