

Ebedmelech
(JER 38-39)

I. The Time, Place and Circumstances.

- A. This was during the last years of the last O.T. king of Judah.
- B. This was just prior to the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the subjugation of the Jews by the Babylonians.
- C. Much of Judah had already been taken captive by the Babylonians.
- D. Jerusalem had been greatly reduced by sin, then by Babylon.
 - 1. Life was cheap. Truth and judgment had departed. **JER 4:31; 5:1-4.**
 - 2. The people were only wise to do evil. **JER 4:22; 9:3.**
 - 3. They abused their fullness religiously and morally. **JER 5:7-8.**
 - 4. Judgment took a back seat to gain. **JER 5:26-28.**
 - 5. False religion propped up the system. **JER 5:30-31; 6:13; 7:8-11.**
 - 6. Children became expendable. **JER 7:31; 19:5.**
 - 7. They thought themselves untouchable. **JER 5:12; 6:14.**
 - 8. Under siege, food became very scarce. **JER 37:21; 38:9.**
 - 9. The situation was about to deteriorate to horrendous levels. **LAM 4:3-10.**
- E. The cup of Judah's iniquity was full: too late for remedy and neither the prayer of the wicked or of the righteous would avail. **2CH 36:16; JER 14:11-12.**

II. The Key Characters.

- A. Jeremiah. His name means "whom Jehovah has appointed."
 - 1. He is known as the weeping prophet.
 - 2. He was ordained a contentious prophet not only to Judah, but to the nations. **JER 15:10; 1:5.**
 - 3. In a time of general apostasy he was apart from the crowd, thus manifesting his approval. **JER 15:16-17 c/w 1CO 11:19.**
 - 4. He preached that resistance of the Babylonians was futile; that Judah's demise was imminent and deserved; and that the only sensible option was to go into captivity and take their licks. **JER 37:9-10; 38:2.**
 - 5. Though he was sorely tempted to silence, he couldn't keep his mouth shut about the truth. **JER 20:7-9.**
 - 6. He received more honour from a Gentile king than from his own king and country. **JER 39:11-12 c/w MAR 6:4.**
 - 7. His ministry much paralleled that of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. Both were ill received by their own countrymen. **JOH 1:11.**
 - b. Both rebuked the management of the temple. **JER 7:11; MAT 21:13.**
 - c. Both were accused of being unpatriotic risks. **JER 37:13; 38:4; JOH 7:12; 11:48.**
 - d. Both lamented the inevitable misery of Jerusalem. **LAM 1:16-17; LUK 19:41-44.**
 - e. Both were men of contention to Jew and Gentile. **ACT 4:26-28.**
 - f. Both were cast into the earth for a season but were delivered to witness again.
- B. Zedekiah. His name means "Jehovah is righteous."
 - 1. He was the last king of Judah until Christ came.
 - 2. His reign marked the overthrow of the royal covenant lineage from David of father to son. **2KI 24:15-17.**

3. His predecessor, Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah, was so wicked that God cut his family line out of royalty and Christ's ancestry. **JER 22:28-30.**
 4. Zedekiah's wickedness was remarkable. **EZE 21:25-27.**
 5. His name was originally Mattaniah, which means "gift of Jehovah." This last king was a gift from Jehovah in the same genre as was their first king. **HOS 13:11.**
 6. Ironically, it was the pagan Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, who renamed him Zedekiah. By this time Daniel had been in captivity for over ten years, so Nebuchadnezzar was probably now well acquainted with Jehovah. **DAN 1:1-3; 2:47; 4:34-37.**
 7. The end of Zedekiah's life is fitting testimony to the justice and irony of God (and that history is really HIS story).
 - a. At the time of Israel's entry into Canaan, the land of their inheritance, their first leader SAW the land, but could not enter it and died outside its borders. **DEU 34:4.**
 - b. At the time when Israel/Judah would lose the land of their inheritance, their last leader dwelt in Canaan, but through fulfillment of a curious prophecy, would not SEE the land of his captivity and death outside of Canaan's borders. **EZE 12:13 c/w JER 39:6-7.**
 - c. Bless God that the promised land believers now can't see, they will see, and death will be no impediment. **ISA 33:17-24; 1TH 4:15-18.**
- C. Ebedmelech. His name means "servant of the king."
1. He was an Ethiopian eunuch who feared the true God.
 - a. The name "Ethiopia" is the same Hebrew word which is elsewhere translated as "Cush" (the son of Ham and father of Nimrod).
 - b. The name "Cush" means "black" (per BDB Dictionary).
 - c. Ethiopians were then, as now, obviously unwhite. **JER 13:23.**
 2. As an eunuch, he could bear no familiar fruit (biologically); he was a "dry tree" (**ISA 56:3**). But his good deeds were fruit of another source of life within: the Holy Spirit.
 3. He is one of a number of notable black people found in the pages of Holy Scripture.
 - a. Moses married an Ethiopian woman. **NUM 12:1.**
 - b. The queen of Sheba is commended by Christ (Sheba being an Ethiopian district, according to Strong's Hebrew Dictionary). **1KI 10:1; MAT 12:42.**
 - c. Another Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip. **ACT 8:27-39.**
 - d. A "Simeon that was called Niger" (niger = black) was a church member and prophet at Antioch. **ACT 13:1.**
 4. It is interesting that the Lord Jesus Christ is a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. **PSA 110:4 c/w HEB 6:20; 7:21.**
 - a. Melchisedec was king of Salem (an early name of Jerusalem, per Strong's), which was in the land of Canaan. **GEN 14:18 c/w PSA 76:2.**
 - b. Canaan was the son of Ham, whose name means "hot" or "sunburnt." **GEN 10:6.**
 - c. Ham was also the father of *Cush* (black) and *Phut* (North African, Libyan). Egypt (a land of darker-skinned peoples) was called "the land of Ham" (via another of Ham's sons, *Mizraim*). **GEN 10:6; PSA 105:23.**
 - d. Thus, it appears that Ham was the source of darker-skinned peoples like the Ethiopians, Libyans and Egyptians. Canaan was likely populated by darker-skinned people also.
 - e. It is possible that Melchisedec was a dark man and our Lord Jesus Christ is

made a priest after his order: a non-Levitical, non-Semitic priest who was superior to the patriarch Abraham. **HEB 7:6-10.**

III. **JER 38:1-6.**

- A. Jeremiah had been in an ongoing conflict with the corrupt priests and false prophets, who had been proclaiming deliverance and peace. **JER 6:13-14; 28:1-14.**
- B. At first, their attacks against Jeremiah were oral. **JER 18:18.**
- C. Then the princes (who once supported Jeremiah, **JER 26:11, 16**) joined in opposition to Jeremiah and the malice degraded to the threat of death. **vs. 1-4.**
 - 1. Contests with priests and prophets on the basis of “What saith the Lord?” may be heated but their malice limited by their assigned authority. But when the civil power joins in their malice, life and liberty become fragile.
 - 2. It is a dangerous union when corrupt religion comes together with corrupt power. **REV 17:6-7.**
- D. The princes petitioned the king for a death warrant on a baseless accusation of being a public enemy, no doubt at the prompting of the false priests and prophets. **v. 4 c/w AMO 7:10-11.**
 - 1. Instead of overcoming with better arguments, the righteous are denounced as dangers to the public good.
 - 2. “Denunciation is the last resort of a defeated opponent.” (A.W. Pink)
 - 3. Questionable speech is not overcome in the civil arena by forbidding it but by more and better speech. But those with weak arguments prefer to cancel opposition, either because they know their own arguments will not bear scrutiny or because they hold that the common man has no common sense. c/w **JOH 7:45-53.**
 - 4. Politicians tend to favor only those men of God who make intercession FOR the nation, not AGAINST it. **ROM 11:2 c/w 1KI 18:17.**
 - 5. These men sought to silence the word of God by binding the prophet, but this is futile (**2TI 2:9**). When God says “surely” (v. 3), He surely means “SURELY.” c/w **GEN 2:17.**
 - 6. The last people that should be eliminated in a time of impending doom are the righteous. For the sake of a few righteous, many others may be spared. **GEN 18:32; ACT 27:24; JER 5:1.**
 - 7. Remember, though, that the land was beyond remedy. **2CH 36:16; EZE 14:14.**
- E. King Zedekiah had secretly favored Jeremiah (**JER 37:17**), but politicians must be politically expedient, so he delivered Jeremiah to their will. **vs. 5-6.**
 - 1. John the Baptist was similarly pawned. **MAR 6:17-29.**
 - 2. So, too, the Lord Jesus Christ. **MAR 15:14-15.**
 - 3. And Paul. **ACT 24:26-27.**
- F. As Christians, let us hereby be instructed:
 - 1. It is easy to be zealous for the truth when pressure is light and support is strong. How shall we fare when the opposition is heavy and strong? **JER 12:5-6.**
 - 2. True Christianity means persecution. **2TI 3:12.**
 - 3. The voice of righteousness is seldom popular, especially in evil times.
 - a. If it is, something is amiss. **LUK 6:26.**
 - b. “If you’re not getting flak, you’re probably not over the target.” (Kent Hovind)
 - 4. The favor of a king may be courted and enjoyed, but should not be relied upon instead of God. Political winds shift. Ultimately, our hope for security is in an immutable God. **PSA 146:3; 118:9; JAM 1:17.**

5. In the hour of testing there may be no support but God, Who suffers it so for a testimony. **2TI 4:16-17; MAT 10:18.**
6. Spiritually, sin can cast us into a pit which we earned: a pit of corruption. **ISA 38:17-18.**
 - a. Sin is the stuff of hell, a pit wherein is no water. **LUK 16:24.**
 - b. Our sins are likened to mire, which drags us down and defiles us. **2PE 2:22.**
 - c. We need an intercessor to speak for us and deliver us.