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God Rejects Zedekiah's Request
21: 1-14

God rejects Zedekiah's request DIG: What kind of a king was Zedekiah (Second Kings 24:18-20)? Does he consult the prophet before or after he makes the decision to stop paying tribute to Babylon? What good news/bad news does Jeremiah give the two priests of Zedekiah? What radical survival tip does Yirmeyahu give them? For saying this, would you brand Jeremiah a traitor, or salute him as a patriot? Would this news sit well, or upset, the soldiers defending Jerusalem? Why? What crisis of faith does Judah now face (Deuteronomy 30:15)? What does God want Zedekiah to do? Is it ever too late for God's people to repent, or is there always time to make peace with Him? Why?

REFLECT: Why do some people never learn? Are you a slow learner do you seem to "get it" pretty quickly? Would you have deserted the City, as Jeremiah advised? What would it have cost you to flee? What would it have cost you to stay? How might leaving Jerusalem be an allegory for becoming a committed believer? What would you need to leave behind to become more committed to Yeshua? Who in your world are "oppressors" and who are the "robbed?" How can you help bring justice to the oppressed?

589 BC during the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah

This incident took place as **the Babylonians** were moving in against **Yerushalayim** and getting ready to lay siege to **the City**. This report drips with irony as **the king** has nowhere to turn except to **God's prophet**. All the conventional forms of strategy and policy had failed. **Jeremiah** had been perceived as an enemy, but now he was **Judah's** only hope.

This was the first time **Zedekiah** would send a delegation to **Jeremiah**, but it would not be the last (**to see link click Fm – Jeremiah in Prison**). What happened here was the fulfillment of a prophecy that **ADONAI** made to **Yirmeyahu** that **a day**

would come when the very ones that were mocking **his** prophecies and rejecting **him** as **a prophet** would come to **him**, seeking the word of **the LORD**. But as **YHVH** had accurately prophesied, by then, it would be too late.

The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent Pash'chur son of Malkijah (not the same Pash'chur seen in **20:1-6**) **and the priest Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah, to him. They** begged: **Inquire now of the LORD for us, not in the sense of seeking information, but to pray on the king's behalf, because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is attacking us. Perhaps ADONAI will perform wonders for us as in times past, so that he will withdraw from us (21:1-2). Zedekiah** pinned **his** hopes on the inviolability of the Temple (see **Cc – False Religion is Worthless**) and divine intervention.

Zedekiah had rebelled against **Yirmeyahu's** prophecies and **the Jewish king** was hoping for a "Hezekiah miracle." When Hezekiah disobeyed **Isaiah** and rebelled against the Assyrians, they also came to the gates of **Yerushalayim** to destroy the city. But Hezekiah was a good king and truly repented of his disobedience, trusted in **the LORD** and was rescued (see the commentary on **Isaiah Gw – Then the Angel of the LORD Put To Death a Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**).

In response to Zedekiah's inquiry Jeremiah made three prophecies. The royal house of Judah, her officials **and people** had all been warned earlier (see **Bx – Concerning the House of David**). What was conditional then . . . becomes fixed now.

First ADONAI's answer concerning Zedekiah: The Babylonians would destroy **Jerusalem**. This would happen within three years of this prophecy. **Jeremiah** said to the two emissaries: **Tell Zedekiah, this is what ADONAI, the God of Isra'el,** says: **I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are outside the wall besieging you. And I will gather them inside this city.** The reason **the Babylonians** would undoubtedly succeed was because **God Himself** would **fight against Jerusalem with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath.** These same words were used to describe how **YHVH** brought **Isra'el** out of Egypt during the time of the exodus centuries earlier. That same power will now be used against **Isra'el**. **I will strike down those who live in this city – both man and beast – and they will die of a terrible plague.** As **God** caused a plague to fall

on the Egyptians (see the commentary on **Exodus Bu – I Will Bring One More Plague on Pharaoh**), **He** will now cause **a plague** to fall on **the Jews (21:3-6)**.

After that, declares **ADONAI, I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the people in this city who survive the plague, sword and famine, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who want to kill them. He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion (21:7).** Twice before, in 605 BC (resulting in **the first deportation**) and 597 BC (resulting in **the second deportation**) **Nebuchadnezzar** had captured **the City.** Both times **he** showed **mercy, pity** and **compassion**. But this time **Nebuchadnezzar** would not. The fulfillment of these verses is found in **Second Kings 25:6-7, 18-21 and Jeremiah 52:9-11, 24-27.**

Second, the LORD's answer concerning the people: Furthermore, tell the people, this is what the LORD says: **See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. The way of death** was to remain inside **the City** and fight **the Babylonians. Whoever stays in Jerusalem will die by the sword, famine or plague.** The judgment was against the arrogant Temple class and the self-serving monarchy. **The way of life** was to go outside **the City** and **surrender to the Babylonians. But whoever goes out** (Hebrew: *yatsa*, the primary word for "exodus") **and surrenders to the Babylonians will escape with their lives.** The reason for this was that **God** had declared **the City** to be devoted to destruction. **I have determined to do this city harm and not good** declares **ADONAI. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire (21:8-10).**

Third, Ha'Shem's answer concerning the house of David: Here **God** does not address a single **king**, but **the house of David. Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, "Hear the word of the LORD." This is what ADONAI says to you, house of David:** this is your responsibility – **administer justice every morning,** in other words, be swift to administer justice**; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed.** But these responsibilities were exactly where **they** had failed. Consequently, **My wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done – burn with no one to quench it. I am against you, Yerushalayim, you who live above this valley** (the land on which **Zion** sits is lower that all the surrounding mountains, so it has the appearance of a **valley**), **on the rocky plateau,** this refers to **Mount Zion** or **Mount Moriah (Second Chronicles 3:1)**, which had a flat surface and for that reason could be used as a threshing floor. That threshing floor was bought by **David** and used by Solomon to build the Temple **(21:11-13a)**.

ADONAI declared to the arrogant **Judeans, "You who say, "Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?"** The reason **God** was **against them** was because of **their** self-reliance and boasting. **They** were so sure **they** could withstand any invasion, based on what had happened to **Jerusalem** when Hezekiah prayed to **the LORD** when the Assyrians surrounded **the City** (see above). **God** would do exactly what **He** had promised **Isra'el** long ago when the Mosaic covenant was confirmed between **YHVH** and **the people**. Blessings were promised for obedience and curses for disobedience **(Leviticus 26 Deuteronomy 27-29)**. King Hezekiah's **repentant heart had given God the opportunity to forgive** and relent on **God's** promise of imminent judgment. Now the situation was entirely different due to **Judah's** and **King Zedekiah's** stubborn and hard heart attitude. **Now Judah's coming to God** was merely to get out of punishment. So sadly, there was **No repentant heart**. Though **God** wanted to forgive **His people, He** is also holy and righteous, and **their** unrepentant, unyielding, uncaring hearts "tied **God's** hands" so **He** could not relent **(Jeremiah 18:7-8).**

The mercy of **ADONAI** prompts **Him** to withhold judgment as long as possible to enable people to repent **(Second Peter 3:8-10)**, but **He** does not wait indefinitely. A time comes when **Ha'Shem** punishes wickedness. **God** said, **I will punish you as your deeds deserve,** declares **Ha'Shem. Jerusalem may be strongly fortified, but the misdeeds of her inhabitants will bring about their undoing. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you** (see **Fk – Jerusalem as a Boling Pot**).