

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JEREMIAH 35-37

Jesus was on retreat with His disciples in Caesarea Philippi, when He asked them, “Who do men say that I am?” The disciples came back with the most recent Gallup tracking poll... “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” But it’s intriguing that there were some folks who mistook Jesus, the Son of God, for Jeremiah!

What a compliment to Jeremiah! He lived 600 years before Christ, but he must’ve been a Christ-like person.

Jeremiah was one of the godliness men in the Bible.

The irony though, is that despite the fact Jeremiah was highly esteemed among the first century Jews, in Jesus’ day - in his own day, the sixth century BC, Jeremiah was much maligned and persecuted.

The man was a priest, a prophet, and a patriot...

Jeremiah maintained a deep intimacy with God...

He spoke boldly the words God gave him to speak...

He interceded with God on behalf of the people...

Yet the Jews of his day, turned a deaf ear to him. They refused to listen to his message. In fact, they tried to shut him up. First, **by slinging mud** - finally by **sinking him in the mud**. Chapter 36 continues the saga of Jeremiah and his attempts to deal with the Jews...

But first, the prophet shifts gears and gives us a story of another group of people called the Rechabites.

Chapter 35, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying...” We’ve mentioned this before, but remember this book is not in chronological order.

“*The days of Jehoiakim*” were eighteen years earlier than the events involving King Zedekiah in chapter 34.

God speaks to Jeremiah, “Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, his brothers and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites,”

The Rechabites were an interesting group of people.

They weren’t true Hebrews. They were Kennites - *a branch of the Midianites, a collection of nomadic tribes.*

These were the descendants of Jethro, who became Moses’ father-in-law - after he left Egypt the first time and married Yvonne de Carlo... I mean “[Zipporah](#).”

Technically, the Rechabites were Gentiles, who seem to have been assimilated into the Israelite family due to their connection with their forefather, Jethro.

Incidentally, the *Jeremiah* in verse 3 is not our Jeremiah. We know the Prophet was never married and thus, never had a son. This man was a Rechabite.

The Jeremiah writes, “And I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the

princes, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door.”

Around the outside of the Temple’s inner court there were chambers, or meeting rooms where different interest groups gathered to conduct Temple business.

A chamber for the ushers, and women’s ministry (*where they kept the leftover fru-fru*), and for children’s ministry. It was sort of like an administrative wing.

The Rechabites were brought to one of these rooms.

Verse 5 must’ve been sort of a test. “Then I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, “Drink wine.”

“But they said, “We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ‘You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever.

You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners.’ Jonadab, father of the Rechabites, lived in Israel shortly after the time of the wicked King Ahab. He helped King Jehu put an end to the vile worship of Baal in the northern kingdom.

And he gave his heirs a few prohibitions.

The Rechabites weren’t to drink wine, or build homes, or plant fields and vineyards. They weren’t to settle down. They were to live a nomadic lifestyle.

Apparently, the Rechabites were like the Nazarites.

In Israel there were men who took a special vow to God. The Nazarite vow involved three prohibitions...

Not to touch the fruit of the vine - grapes or wine...

Not to cut your hair...

And not to come in contact with anything dead.

The Nazarites were a walking billboard for the values of God. They avoided *cocktails, clips, and cemeteries*.

Wine represented physical pleasure. Hair is a part of outward beauty. A corpse reminds us of life's brevity.

Thus, to avoid wine was to seek spiritual pleasure over physical. To forego a haircut was to value inward beauty over outward. And to steer clear of corpses and funerals was to set your sites on eternity rather than the here and now... The Nazarite's life was an advertisement for godly living - *real pleasure is found in spiritual things not physical, real beauty is inward not outward, real meaning is found in eternity not on earth.*

The vow of the Rechabites was not as extensive, but it too majored on avoiding *wine* and not planting *vines*.

Wine is a symbol of earthly, physical pleasure. And though the Bible allows it in moderation, the Scriptures warn us repeatedly of its dangers. It can lead us astray.

The Rechabite vow was also about sinking roots.

Essentially, their lifestyle said don't get comfortable in this life. Like Christians today they were pilgrims and strangers on earth. They should live like citizens of heaven. *The Rechabites had been faithful to their vow.*

They continue in verse 8, “Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.” For 300 years they had kept their father’s commands. And even now when tested by Jeremiah these faithful folks had remain resolute.

They continue, verse 11, “But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, ‘Come, let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and for fear of the army of the Syrians.’ So we dwell at Jerusalem.”

The only reason they’re inside the city now was due to the Babylonians outside. They sought protection.

“Then came the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Will you not receive instruction to obey My words?” says the Lord. “The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; for to this day they drink none, and obey their father’s commandment.

But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, you did not obey Me. I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then

you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.’ But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me. Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me.”

God was using the Rechabites to prick the conscience of the Jews. For 300 years they were faithful to their father’s calling. Yet the Jews couldn’t remain obedient to their Father God for a few weeks..

Verse 17 continues, “Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called to them but they have not answered.’

And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.”’” Because they were faithful, God will favor the Rechabites. God loves obedience.

The Rechabites will always have a representative before God. According to the Jewish Mishnah, they had a special day of the year where it was their honor to collect firewood for the altar in the Temple.

I suppose a descendant of Jonadab is hanging out around the throne in heaven today. They'll also have a special place in Jesus' administration when He returns.

Chapter 36, "Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying..."

The fourth year of Jehoiakim was 605 BC, the first time Nebuchadnezzar threatened Jerusalem. This was 19 years before the final fall of the city - about half-way through the forty year ministry of the Prophet Jeremiah.

Verse 2, "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." The Jews had turned a deaf ear to God's warnings, but perhaps if they had a book!

Jeremiah is to self-publish his God-given messages.

"Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah (Baruch was Jeremiah's assistant); and Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him."

Baruch was the stenographer, he took dictation from Jeremiah. "And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, "I am confined, I cannot go into the house of the Lord."

Apparently, he'd been banned from the Temple. So "You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the Lord, in the hearing of the people in the Lord's house on the day of fasting. And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities."

This fast was called by the leaders of the nation, in response to the national crisis facing Judah - *the Babylonian invasion*. Such an event would attract a huge crowd. The Temple would be packed with people. Baruch had a captive audience to read this book.

Verse 7, "It may be that they will present their supplication before the Lord, and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great is the anger and the fury that the Lord has pronounced against this people."

And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house." Next is a play-by-play of what happens next...

Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month (that is December), that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem."

Likely, it was a cool day. Lots of sweaters. It was a perfect day to stand outside in a crowd and listen to public oratory... "Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of

Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house, in the hearing of all the people.”

Verse 11, “When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the Lord from the book, he then went down to the king's house, into the scribe's chamber; and there all the princes were sitting - Elishama the scribe, Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan the son of Achbor, Gemariah the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. Then Michaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the hearing of the people. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch, saying, “Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read in the hearing of the people, and come.” So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them.

And they said to him, “Sit down now, and read it in our hearing.” So Baruch read it in their hearing.” He read it once publicly in open air fashion in the Temple.

Now Baruch holds a private screening for the king's cabinet. Here's a message the leaders needed to hear.

Verse 16, “Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, “We will surely tell the king of all these words.” The king knew these words - he'd heard Jeremiah, yet he had rejected the Prophet's counsel.

And they asked Baruch, saying, “Tell us now, how did you write all these words - at his instruction?” They want to verify

authorship, “So Baruch answered them, “He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the book.”

“Then the princes said to Baruch, “Go and hide, you and Jeremiah; and let no one know where you are.”

They were looking out for the prophet. They knew his message would not sit well with the king. He could get violent and it become hazardous to Jeremiah’s health.

Verse 20, “And they went to the king, into the court; but they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the hearing of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elishama the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king.

Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month (or December), with a fire burning on the hearth before him.” There must’ve been a little chilly.

The king was keeping warm by the fire - he was in his slippers and bathrobe - feet propped up - hanging out in the royal recliner - enjoying a hot bowl of Cheri’s chili... He might’ve been roasting marsh mellows.

“And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.” Jehoiakim didn’t even let Jehudi finish. All it took was three of four columns to infuriate the King.

Jehoiakim grabs the book from Baruch, takes a knife, cuts it up in pieces, and then tosses it in the fire.

Ever run across a critic of Christianity and the Bible, who had rejected it without even reading it through?

They'd made up their minds in advance. Why let facts interfere with their prejudice. They're certainly not seeking the truth. Their goal is to back up their bias.

Think of ways that people today cut up the Bible. There are **liars**, and **liberals**, and **the lukewarm**.

Liars are cultists who deny doctrines clearly taught in Scripture. They cut and paste, twist and torture to make the Bible say what it was never meant to say.

Tonight, in Kingdom Halls and in Mormon wards, rather than let the Bible mean what it says, it's being slice and diced to fit someone's bias and false doctrine.

The same is done in **liberal** circles in the name of what's called "**Higher Criticism**" - where scholars dare to tell you what is and isn't the reliable Word of God.

These people have an anti-supernatural bias, so that anything in the text that smacks of a miracle is rejected off-hand. It's arbitrary and arrogant. It's the equivalent of grabbing the book in anger, and cutting it up with a knife, and eliminating what makes you uncomfortable.

It reminds me of the atheistic professor who asked his class satirically, "**How did Jonah possibly survive in the belly of a whale?**" A Christian student replied, "**I don't know, but when I get to heaven I'll ask him?**"

The professor smarted back, "*What if Jonah isn't in heaven?*" The Christian replied, "*Then you ask him!*"

It's interesting, Jehoiakim cut up the scroll before he threw it in the fire. And this is what liberals do today.

They don't just reject the Bible and throw it in the fire, they first have to try and cut it up - discredit its authority. It's not enough for liberals to dismiss the Bible, they first want to mock it, refute it, discredit it.

For the last century the Bible has been under attack.

The Documentary Hypothesis... The Deutero-Isaiah Theory... Late Dates ascribed to Daniel... The Jesus Seminar... Today, there's the search for the historical Jesus... and post-modern takes on the Scripture... these are all efforts to cast doubt on God's Word.

The warning Jesus gave to false teachers in His day, applies today, Matthew 18:6, "*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.*"

Yet perhaps the worst example of a modern-day Jehoiakim is the pastor who believes the Bible to be God's inerrant Word, yet rather than teach the whole counsel of God, he only addresses the portions that are his favorites, or that won't spark any controversy.

You don't even have to dull your blade, you can eliminate whole passages of Scripture by just never dealing with them. If the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the reality of hell is going

to make the pastor or his listeners uncomfortable - just avoid it. Don't go there.

Christians often make the same mistake by always reading the same passages, to the neglect of others. For some of us our highlighter is actually our penknife.

Paul told the Ephesians in Acts 20:27, **"I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."** Don't ever forget we're responsible for *all the Book*.

It reminds me of the son who went to seminary. His father was worried about the school's liberal leanings and what it might do to his son's faith. Before he left home dad told his son, **"Don't let them take Jonah from you."** He knew that Jonah contained some miraculous elements which made it a favorite target for liberals.

When the son came home, dad asked him, **"Do you still have Jonah?"** The son said, **"No dad I don't, but neither do you."** His dad was appalled, **"I certainly do!"**

His son said, **"No you don't. Just check and see."**

The father retrieved his Bible, and sure enough Jonah was ripped out. His son said, **"I did that before I went to seminary. What's the difference if I lose Jonah through doubt, and you lose it through neglect?"**

Well, back to Jehoiakim, verse 24, **"Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words."** They should've been afraid of the righteous hand of God!

"Nevertheless Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah implored the king not to burn the scroll; but he would not listen to them."

And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them." And I like that wording, "*the Lord hid them.*" God takes care of His servants! He is able to protect them.

Remember when God called Jeremiah, He said of the kings, and princes, and priests, and people, "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you... To deliver you." Here God is fulfilling the original promise that He made to Jeremiah.

Verse 27, "Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying: "Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.

And you shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'Thus says the Lord: "You have burned this scroll, saying, 'Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and cause man and beast to cease from here?'" Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them; but they did not heed." Jehoiakim's son, Jeconiah, reined just three months, before he was taken to Babylon.

That left Jehoiakim with no one to sit on the throne. The final king of Judah was his brother, Zedekiah.

“Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire.

And besides, there were added to them many similar words.” Jehoiakim’s attempt at destroying God’s Word was thwarted, as have all other attacks since that time.

In 300 AD the Roman emperor, Diocletian, ordered the destruction of all Bibles. Possessing a Bible was a capital crime. Yet fifty years after Diocletian’s death, the next Roman emperor ordered the copying of fifty new Bibles, paid for at the government’s expense.

God has supernaturally preserved His Word.

Kings will come and go, but the Word of God abides forever. Despite a myriad of enemies and a plethora of attacks the Bible remains. It’s proven indestructible!

Here’re a few excerpts from a poem by AZ Conrad...

"Century follows century, there It stands... Empires rise and fall and are forgotten, kings are crowned and uncrowned, emperors decree its extermination, there It stands... Storms of hate swirl about it, atheists rail against it, agnostics smile cynically, profane punsters caricature it, there it stands... Unbelief abandons it, higher critics denies it, the tooth of time gnaws but dents it not, infidels predict its abandonment, modernism tries to explain it away, there It stands...

It is the light on the pathway in the darkest night, it awakens men and women numbed by sin - it answers every question of the soul, salvation is its watchword, eternal life is its goal... It is forward-looking, outward-looking, and upward-looking. It outlives, outlifts, outloves, outreaches, outranks, and outruns all other books. Trust it, love it, obey it, and eternal life is yours."

Chapter 37 fasts forward to a later day. "Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah." That summarizes the whole book!

"And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Pray now to the Lord our God for us." Here's another example of what we talked about earlier - **panic-piety**. The Jews had rejected Jeremiah's message for forty years - tried to silence him, even kill him. Now they're in trouble and they come to him for prayer! "*Please, intercede for us!*"

Verse 4, "Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. Then Pharaoh's army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem."

This gave the Jews false hope. Pharaoh Hophra had marched his army north to confront the Babylonians.

Nebuchadnezzar had withdrawn his troops from the walls around Jerusalem temporarily to deal with the Egyptians. But when the Jews saw the pull-out, they rejoiced, *“The prophets are right! Jeremiah is wrong! God has brought peace and safety to Jerusalem.”*

“Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.” You’re not out-of-the-woods after all.

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will surely depart from us,” for they will not depart. For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.” In other words, your problem is not the Babylonians, but God! Babylon was God’s tool to bring judgment. Their destiny has been ordained by God.

At times we think our problem is our circumstances, and if our surroundings change then we’ll be all right.

But seldom is that true. Your problem is not *your job, your wife, your kids, your school* - it might be you. It could be your conflict is not with people, but with God.

Verse 11, “And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh’s army, that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people.” This was the property he purchased in Chapter 32. It was a symbol of his faith in God’s promise. *The people will return to their land.*

First though, they’ll be judged and taken to Babel...

Yet for the moment the invaders are gone, so he has the opportunity to check out the field he purchased.

Verse 13, “And when he was in the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there whose name was Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “You are defecting to the Chaldeans!”

Notice Irijah’s ancestry! He was the grandson of a man named “Hananiah.” This was Jeremiah’s old adversary - the false prophet who broke the yoke he wore into the Temple, and refuted his message.

Hananiah said Babylon will be toppled in two years. Jeremiah said Hananiah will be dead within the year. *Guess who was right?* Hananiah died in two months.

Now Hananiah’s grandson, Irijah, arrests Jeremiah. He accuses God’s Prophet of treason - of defecting to the enemy. Irijah is carrying out a personal vendetta.

“Then Jeremiah said, “False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans.” But he did not listen to him. So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes.”

“Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison.” Don't gloss over word *“struck”* without knowing what it implies. The Jewish beating consisted of 39 lashes with a cat-of-nine tails. A whip of multiple cords, embedded with bone or ivory, ripped open the victim's back. Many a man died from this punitive striking.

The Prophet Jeremiah was beaten and chained in a dark, cold, damp, rat-infested hell hole called a prison.

Verse 16, “When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days, then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out.

The king asked him secretly in his house, and said, “Is there any word from the Lord?” This was quite a scene. Imagine, the king in all his pomp sitting on a throne clothed in his royal robes and golden crown.

And standing across from the king is an old man shivering from the cold. He's bloody and wounded.

What a contrast - the evil king and prophet of God!

And this meeting has been arranged discreetly, covertly. Zedekiah doesn't want to seem dependent on the man of God, yet he knows he speaks for the Almighty... *“Is there any word from the Lord?”*

In years past, this king's glory had been *his wisdom, his might, his riches*. But now with the enemy outside his walls and his defeat almost certain - *his wisdom and might and riches* are worthless to him. He would gladly trade them all for

what Jeremiah possesses - a relationship with God... the knowledge of God.

Yet what Jeremiah had was his goal from the beginning. He'd taken heed to God's wisdom in 9:23.

The Lord had declared, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth."

Rather than *wisdom, or might, or riches* Jeremiah had sought to know God. Now what He possesses, not what the king has, is suddenly in great demand.

If you seek after God instead of this material world, people may mock you - think you're crazy... *for a time*.

But when the chips are down - when a crisis comes - if you know God, you'll be the first person they call.

We've mentioned King Zedekiah in previous passages, but we get a real glimpse into his true personality and character in these next few chapters.

Sadly, this king was a wimp! He was a *royal* in name only. He was the type of man who would agree with the last person he talked to. He was easily swayed.

He started out pro-Babylonian. He was put in power by Nebuchadnezzar. But he inherited a pro-Egypt cabinet. And he played both sides - appease everyone.

Zedekiah was the quintessential politician. He was like a weather vane - he was turned by the currents.

Zedekiah actually had a great respect for Jeremiah. He knew Jeremiah was a true man of God. He always wanted to know what Jeremiah had to say. Zedekiah recognized him as God's spokesman. But the king lacked guts to follow through on Jeremiah's guidance.

Privately, he seeks the Prophet's wisdom, but publicly he keeps aloof. He fears the scorn and ridicule he'll receive if he appears too chummy with Jeremiah.

That's why here he calls for a secret audience.

Ultimately, Zedekiah was more interested in political ramifications than he was in spiritual commitments.

It's been said, "A politician is an animal who can sit on a fence and keep both ears to the ground."

That sums up King Zedekiah...

He lacked the courage to obey what he knew was right. His efforts to compromise cost him his kingdom, crown, family - even his eyes - probably his very soul.

So King Zedekiah asks the Prophet, *"Is there any word from the Lord?"* And verse 17 tells us, *"And Jeremiah said, 'There is.' Then he said, 'You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!'"*

It's the same message he'd proclaimed for months. It just wasn't the message Zedekiah wanted to hear.

One thing is for sure, Jeremiah's response took tremendous courage. The prophet refuses to soften God's word to the king one iota. He's straight up.

Verse 18, “Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What offense have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land’?” It’s the lying prophets who ought to be in prison, not Jeremiah!

“Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.” Apparently, the dungeon had been hard on Jeremiah. He was old. The conditions were brutal. If he’d to return there he’d probably died.

Jeremiah pleads with the king for a reassignment.

Verse 21, “Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.” He was still in prison, but now a minimum security. And he was ordered a daily ration of bread.

It doesn’t sound like much to us, but compared to what he’d been eating, a piece of bread from bakers’ street - the main market - would be a nutritional feast.

The king’s mercy probably saved Jeremiah’s life.