

Jeremiah 20:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

Analysis

Pashur's response to Jeremiah was violent: 'smote' (nakah, נִקָּה—struck, beat) and 'put him in the stocks' (mahpeket, מַהְפֵּקֶת). The Hebrew word for stocks refers to a torture device that twisted the body into painful contorted positions—not mere confinement but intentional infliction of pain and humiliation. The location 'in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD' made the punishment public—positioned where worshipers entering the temple would see Jeremiah's shame. This was designed to discredit the prophet, showing what happened to those who spoke against temple theology. The irony is profound: a priest, supposedly serving God, tortures God's prophet at God's house for speaking God's word. This reveals how religious persecution often comes from religious people. Jesus later experienced similar treatment from religious authorities (Matthew 26:67-68), and His followers faced persecution from both Jewish and Christian religious establishments. The verse illustrates the cost of faithful prophetic ministry—not just rejection but active persecution, often from those who claim to represent God.

Historical Context

Public punishment in the stocks served multiple purposes in ancient societies: physical pain, public humiliation, and deterrence. Being confined overnight (see v. 3) meant exposure to elements, inability to attend to bodily needs, and vulnerability to mockery from passers-by. For a prophet, this punishment was

especially shaming—it suggested his message came from derangement or demon-possession rather than divine revelation. Similar persecution occurred to other prophets: Micaiah imprisoned (1 Kings 22:26-27), Hanani put in stocks (2 Chronicles 16:10), Amos told to flee (Amos 7:12-13). The early church experienced identical treatment: apostles beaten and imprisoned for preaching (Acts 5:40, 16:23-24), Paul repeatedly beaten and jailed (2 Corinthians 11:23-25). Throughout church history, faithful preachers have faced violence from religious authorities threatened by biblical truth. Jeremiah's suffering anticipated Christ's and models the cost of faithful ministry in fallen world.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does Jeremiah's willingness to endure torture rather than compromise his message teach about the seriousness of speaking God's truth?
2. How should we respond when the cost of faithful biblical witness includes not just disagreement but active persecution?
3. In what ways does religious persecution by religious people (Pashur the priest) reveal the danger of confusing institutional religion with genuine faithfulness to God?

Interlinear Text

עַל	אֶת	וְ	לִתְתִּין	לְפָנֶיךָ	וְרַ	לְפָנֶיךָ	וְרַ	לְפָנֶיךָ	וְרַ	לְפָנֶיךָ	וְרַ	לְפָנֶיךָ
smote	Then Pashur	H853	Jeremiah	the prophet	and put							
H5221	H6583		H3414	H5030	H5414							
him in the stocks		H834	gate	of Benjamin	that were in the high							
H4115		H8179	H1144		H5945							
בְּבֵית	יְהוָה:											
which was by the house	of the LORD											
H1004		H3068										

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 37:13 (Prophecy): And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

Jeremiah 1:19 (References Lord): And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Zechariah 14:10 (Parallel theme): All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

2 Chronicles 16:10 (Parallel theme): Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.

Jeremiah 36:26 (Prophecy): But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

Jeremiah 29:26 (Prophecy): The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every

man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

1 Kings 22:27 (Parallel theme): And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

2 Chronicles 24:21 (References Lord): And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org