

Jeremiah 21:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

Analysis

When king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest—this verse introduces a critical historical moment during Jerusalem's final siege (588-586 BC). King Zedekiah, Judah's last monarch, sends official delegates to inquire of Jeremiah. Note this is a different Pashur from the one who imprisoned Jeremiah (20:1-6). The delegation includes both a royal official and a priest, showing the gravity of the situation.

The timing is crucial: Nebuchadnezzar's army surrounds Jerusalem, and Zedekiah—having previously ignored and imprisoned Jeremiah—now desperately seeks divine intervention. This represents the tragic pattern of seeking God only in crisis while ignoring Him during prosperity. The Hebrew construction *davar asher hayah* (דָבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה, 'the word which came') uses the prophetic formula emphasizing that what follows is authentic divine revelation, not human counsel. This oracle would prove devastating: God would fight against Jerusalem (v. 5), overturning all hope for miraculous deliverance. The tragic irony is palpable—Zedekiah seeks God's intervention when he has spent years rejecting God's word through Jeremiah.

Historical Context

This event occurred in 588 BC during the Babylonian siege, approximately eighteen months before Jerusalem's fall. Zedekiah was a weak king installed by Nebuchadnezzar after deporting Jehoiachin in 597 BC. Despite swearing loyalty to

Babylon, Zedekiah rebelled, hoping for Egyptian support (Ezekiel 17:15). When Babylon besieged Jerusalem in response, Zedekiah briefly experienced Egyptian military intervention that lifted the siege temporarily (Jeremiah 37:5). It was likely during this brief respite that Zedekiah sent this delegation, hoping God would perform another miracle like Sennacherib's defeat in Hezekiah's day (2 Kings 19:35). The names Pashur and Zephaniah are confirmed in extra-biblical sources as common Judean names of this period. Zephaniah appears again in Jeremiah 29:25, 29 as initially sympathetic to Jeremiah.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does Zedekiah's pattern of ignoring Jeremiah except in crisis teach about merely using God as a problem-solver versus truly submitting to His lordship?
2. How does this passage warn against expecting God to miraculously intervene when we have persistently rejected His revealed will?

Interlinear Text

יְהוָה מֵאַת אָלָף הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּאָתָּה יְרַמֵּי הָוְה
from the LORD which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD
H3414 H1961 H834 H3068 H853 H1697

בָּנִי	פָּשָׁchor	אֶת	צָדְקִי הָוּ	בְּמַלְךָ	אֶל יְה	בְּשֶׁל מַ
sent	H413	when king	Zedekiah	H853	unto him Pashur	the son

ל אמר בכה | מHIGH שׁה ה אמת מלך ה
of Melchiah H853 and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest saying

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 29:25 (References Lord): Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

Jeremiah 37:3 (Kingdom): 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 unto the LORD our God for us.

Jeremiah 52:24 (Parallel theme): And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

Jeremiah 38:1 (Word): Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

Jeremiah 37:1 (Kingdom): And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

1 Chronicles 9:12 (Parallel theme): And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer;
