

Jeremiah 21:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

Analysis

Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us—Zedekiah's request uses *darash* (דָרַשׁ, to seek, inquire, consult), the technical term for seeking prophetic revelation. **For Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us**—the spelling 'Nebuchadrezzar' (instead of Nebuchadnezzar) reflects the Babylonian pronunciation *Nabu-kudurri-usur*. The present tense 'maketh war' conveys the active, ongoing siege with armies at the gates.

If so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us—here lies Zedekiah's fatal misunderstanding. He hopes for *niphla'otayv* (נִפְלָאֹתָיו, wonderful/miraculous works) like God performed for previous generations: the Exodus plagues, Jericho's walls, Sennacherib's defeat. The phrase 'that he may go up from us' (*ya'aleh me'alenu, עַלְהָ מֵעַלְנוּ*) means 'that he [Nebuchadnezzar] may withdraw from us.' Zedekiah wants deliverance without repentance, miraculous intervention without covenant faithfulness. He treats God like a tribal deity obligated to defend His people regardless of their behavior. This presumption ignores decades of prophetic warning. God's 'wondrous works' in the past came when His people trusted Him; now Jerusalem faces judgment for persistent rebellion. The irony is devastating: the coming 'wonder' would be God fighting for Babylon against His own people (v. 5).

Historical Context

Zedekiah's hope was not unfounded historically. When Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC, God miraculously destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, vindicating Hezekiah's faith (2 Kings 19:35). But critical differences existed: Hezekiah trusted God and obeyed the prophet Isaiah, while Zedekiah had rebelled against Babylon in violation of his sworn oath (Ezekiel 17:13-18) and repeatedly rejected Jeremiah's counsel. Moreover, God had explicitly declared through Jeremiah that seventy years of Babylonian dominance were decreed (Jeremiah 25:11-12). Zedekiah confused God's past grace with guaranteed future intervention, failing to recognize that judgment had been pronounced and the time for repentance had passed. The Babylonian siege lasted approximately eighteen months, with brief interruption when Egypt marched north, causing temporary Babylonian withdrawal (Jeremiah 37:5-11)—but Babylon returned to complete Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Zedekiah's request reveal the danger of presuming upon God's past mercies while ignoring present disobedience?
2. In what ways might we wrongly expect God to 'perform wonders' to rescue us from consequences of persisting in sin?

Interlinear Text

נְבוּכָדְרָאצֵר כִּי יְהִי הַצְדָּקָה אֶת בְּعֵד נָא תִּשְׁאַל דָּבָר
for Nebuchadrezzar for the sake of the LORD I pray thee of the LORD for us
H5019 H3588 H3068 H853 H1157 H4994 Enquire H1875

יְשַׁׁעַת הָאָוֹלִי בְּבֵבָל מְלָךְ מִנְמָרָה עַל יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ בָּבָל
will deal with us according to all his wondrous works king of Babylon maketh war
H6213 H194 H3898 H894 H4428

נְפָלָאת יְהִי כָּל אֹתָהּ נָא תִּשְׁאַל יְהִי הַצְדָּקָה אֶת בְּעֵד נָא
with us according to all his wondrous works I pray thee of the LORD H3605 H854 H3068

מֵעַל יְהִי מֵעַל הַמְּלִיכָה
that he may go up H5921 H5927

Additional Cross-References

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 37:7 (Kingdom): Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

1 Samuel 28:15 (Parallel theme): And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

1 Samuel 28:6 (References Lord): And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

