

Jeremiah 37:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

Analysis

Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah—their anger (qatsap, קָצַף, intense displeasure/fury) reveals predetermined hostility unrelated to evidence. They were angry at Jeremiah's message and seized the arrest as opportunity to punish him. **And smote him**—the Hebrew hikou (הִקּוּ, beat/struck) indicates violent assault, likely flogging. This official beating recalls the earlier assault when Pashur struck Jeremiah and put him in stocks (20:2).

And put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison—this improvised prison in beit hasofer (בֵּית הַסּוֹפֵר, house of the scribe) suggests Jerusalem's regular facilities were overwhelmed or destroyed during siege conditions. Scribes were educated officials who managed administrative functions; Jonathan's house was commandeered as detention center. The phrase ki-otoasu beit hakele (פִּי-אֹתוֹ עָשָׂו בֵּית הַכֹּלֶא, for they had made that the prison) explains this unusual arrangement.

The beating and imprisonment constitute official persecution for prophetic ministry. This pattern runs throughout Scripture: Elijah fled Jezebel's wrath, Micaiah was imprisoned for true prophecy (1 Kings 22:27), John the Baptist was beheaded, Jesus was crucified, apostles were beaten (Acts 5:40). Faithful proclamation often provokes violent opposition from those whose power or ideology is threatened by God's word (John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's conditions during the extended siege (18 months total) were desperate. Famine, disease, and military pressure created chaos. Normal civic institutions broke down. Jonathan the scribe's house being repurposed as prison suggests official facilities were unavailable or needed for military purposes. The dungeon mentioned in verse 16 was particularly harsh—likely a cistern or underground chamber. Jeremiah's treatment contrasts sharply with Zedekiah's later private consultations (vv. 17-21), showing the king's conflicted posture: respecting the prophet privately while allowing officials to persecute him publicly.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why does faithful proclamation of God's word often provoke violent opposition from civil authorities?
2. How should we respond when officially punished for speaking biblical truth?
3. What does the princes' anger at Jeremiah (despite flimsy evidence) reveal about the real nature of opposition to prophetic ministry?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה וְיָהָבָבָה
were wroth Wherefore the princes
H7107 H8269 H5921
יְרַמְּאֵת הָוֹ
with Jeremiah
H3414 H5221 H853
לְבַבְּ יְהָבָבָה וְרַמְּאֵת
him and put in the house him in prison in the house of Jonathan
H5414 H853 H1004 H612 H1004 H3083
לְבַבְּ יְהָבָבָה
the scribe for they had made in the house that the prison
H3588 H853 H6213 H1004 H3608

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:26 (Parallel theme): Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

Acts 5:18 (Parallel theme): And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

Jeremiah 26:16 (Parallel theme): Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

Matthew 21:35 (Parallel theme): And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Genesis 39:20 (Parallel theme): And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

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.

2 Chronicles 18:26 (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 return in peace.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org