

Jeremiah 37:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

Analysis

When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins—the Hebrew beit habor (בֵּית הַבָּור, house of the pit/dungeon) and chanuiot (חֲנוּיוֹת, vaulted chambers/cells) describe a particularly harsh underground prison, likely a converted cistern with vaulted side chambers. The bor (pit) often refers to cisterns or wells, dark, damp, and confining (38:6 describes such a cistern where Jeremiah later sank in mire). The chanuiot were arch-covered cells, essentially crypts or vaults.

And Jeremiah had remained there many days—the phrase yamim rabbim (יָמִים רַבִּים, many days) indicates extended imprisonment in these wretched conditions. The location was not merely confinement but designed to break the prisoner through physical misery. Darkness, dampness, isolation, and likely unsanitary conditions made survival difficult. Yet Jeremiah endured, maintaining faithfulness to his prophetic calling.

This imprisonment foreshadows Christ's suffering—unjustly condemned, physically abused, confined in darkness. It also anticipates Paul's imprisonments for gospel witness (Philippians 1:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:9). The faithful often suffer not despite their obedience but because of it. Yet God sustains His servants even in dungeons; Jeremiah was eventually rescued (vv. 17-21), and his prophecies were vindicated by their precise fulfillment.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern dungeons were notoriously harsh. Cisterns converted to prisons were common—underground chambers accessed through narrow openings, dark, cold, and damp. Jeremiah 38:6 describes being lowered into a cistern where he sank in mud, requiring rescue. Such conditions could kill prisoners through disease, exposure, or despair. That Jeremiah survived 'many days' testifies to either divine preservation or minimal care from sympathizers. His later private audience with Zedekiah (v. 17) suggests the king knew about and tacitly approved the prophet's harsh treatment while maintaining plausible deniability.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How did Jeremiah maintain faith and prophetic integrity during extended imprisonment in such harsh conditions?
2. What does this suffering teach about the cost of faithful prophetic ministry?
3. How should we respond when obeying God leads to unjust suffering rather than deliverance?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה	הַבָּזָר	בְּיַתְּרָה	בְּאַלְמָנָה	בְּאַלְמָנָה	וְאֵלֶּה	הַבָּזָר	בְּיַתְּרָה	בְּאַלְמָנָה	בְּאַלְמָנָה
H3588	was entered	When Jeremiah	H413	into the dungeon	H953			H413	
H935		H3414		H1004					

בְּבָיִם:	וְאֵלֶּה	יָמִים	בְּבָיִם:	וְאֵלֶּה	יָמִים	בְּבָיִם:	וְאֵלֶּה	יָמִים	בְּבָיִם:
and into the cabins	had remained	H8033	When Jeremiah	H3414	days	H3117	there many	H7227	
H2588		H3427							

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:6 (Parallel theme): Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

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