

Jeremiah 37:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

Analysis

What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? (מִהֶחֱטֵאתִי לָךְ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וְלָעָם הַזֶּה). Jeremiah's rhetorical question employs *chata* (חָטָא), meaning to sin, miss the mark, or commit an offense—the standard Hebrew term for transgression. His triple address—to the king, his servants, and the people—emphasizes that his imprisonment had no legal or moral justification.

Jeremiah had faithfully proclaimed God's word for decades, calling Judah to repentance and warning of Babylonian conquest if they persisted in rebellion. Rather than rewarding his faithfulness, Zedekiah imprisoned him for 'sedition'—the timeless pattern of killing messengers who bring unwelcome truth. The irony is profound: the nation's true betrayer was Zedekiah, who violated his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 17:13-19), while Jeremiah's counsel to submit to Babylon aligned with God's sovereign plan. This scene foreshadows Jesus before Pilate (John 18:33-38), where the sinless One faces accusation while the guilty pronounce judgment. The prophet's suffering for faithful proclamation anticipates the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

Historical Context

This occurred during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BC), specifically during a brief reprieve when Egyptian forces approached, causing the Chaldeans

to temporarily withdraw (37:5). Zedekiah had imprisoned Jeremiah in 'the house of Jonathan the scribe' (37:15), which had been converted into a prison. The imprisonment followed Jeremiah's attempt to leave Jerusalem to claim his family inheritance in Anathoth—he was arrested at the gate on false charges of defecting to the Babylonians (37:11-14). The conditions were brutal ('entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins,' 37:16), and Jeremiah feared he would die there. Zedekiah's weak character is evident—he sought Jeremiah's counsel privately but lacked courage to publicly vindicate him or heed his warnings.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Why do people often punish truth-tellers rather than heed their warnings?
2. How does Jeremiah's unjust suffering for faithful proclamation point forward to Christ's passion?
3. What does Jeremiah's appeal teach about responding to injustice—is protest against unjust treatment compatible with submission to God's sovereign purposes?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יִרְמְיָהוּ הוּא	אֶל	הַמֶּלֶךְ	צִדְקִיָּהוּ הוּא	מָה
said	Moreover Jeremiah	H413	unto king	Zedekiah	H4100
H559	H3414		H4428	H6667	
חָטָאתִי	לָךְ	וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ	וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ	וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ	וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ
What have I offended	H0	against thee or against thy servants	H5650	or against this people	H5971
H2398					
הִנֵּה הֵא	כִּי	נָתַתָּה	אֹתִי	אֶל	בֵּית
H2088	H3588	that ye have put	H853	H413	me in prison
		H5414		H1004	H3608

Additional Cross-References

Acts 25:8 (Parallel theme): While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

John 10:32 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

Acts 25:11 (Parallel theme): For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Acts 25:25 (Parallel theme): But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

Daniel 6:22 (Kingdom): My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.