

Jeremiah 38:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

Analysis

Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king—

This Ethiopian eunuch's name means 'servant of the king,' yet he proved more courageous than the king himself. As a foreigner and servant, Ebed-melech risked everything to speak truth to power and rescue God's prophet. His intervention demonstrates that true faith transcends ethnicity and status—a Cushite slave showed more covenant loyalty than Judah's princes and king.

The phrase 'went forth' suggests Ebed-melech actively sought an audience rather than waiting to be summoned. He had heard that the princes cast Jeremiah into the cistern (38:6) and acted immediately. His boldness contrasts with Zedekiah's cowardice and the princes' murderous cruelty. That a foreigner recognized and defended God's prophet while the covenant people tried to murder him indicts Israel's apostasy.

Ebed-melech foreshadows the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 similarly represents Africa's inclusion in the gospel. Jesus honored Gentile faith repeatedly—the centurion (Matthew 8:10), the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:29)—often finding greater faith among outsiders than insiders. Ebed-melech received a personal promise of deliverance because 'thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD' (39:18), showing that covenant membership depends on faith, not ethnicity.

Historical Context

Ethiopians (Cushites) in Jerusalem's royal court reflect the cosmopolitan nature of ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. Ebed-melech was likely a servant in the royal household with access to the king. His position as a eunuch meant he had no family or future beyond service, making his courage even more remarkable—he had everything to lose and nothing to gain. His intervention saved Jeremiah from death in the muddy cistern, allowing the prophet to witness Jerusalem's fall and minister to the remnant. When the city fell, Jeremiah ensured Ebed-melech received God's promised protection (39:15-18)—a Gentile's faith was rewarded while the unfaithful covenant people perished.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Ebed-melech's courage as a foreign slave teach about how God values faith over ethnicity or status?
2. How does this Ethiopian's intervention anticipate the gospel's inclusion of all nations?
3. In what ways might outsiders sometimes demonstrate greater faithfulness than religious insiders?

Interlinear Text

אֲלֵי	רִדְבָּר	בְּמִלְחָמָה	מִבֵּית	מִלְחָמָה	עָבֵד	לְגָדָל	וְאֵלָי
went forth	H3318	Ebedmelech	H5663	house	H1004	out of the king's	H4428
							H1696

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