

Jeremiah 39:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.

Analysis

The Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho (בְּעֶרְבוֹת יֶרִיחוֹ, be'arvot yericho)—How bitterly ironic: Zedekiah was captured near Jericho, where Joshua's obedience once brought miraculous victory (Joshua 6), while Zedekiah's disobedience brought catastrophic defeat. The verb nasag (נָשַׁג, 'overtook') suggests the inevitability of divine justice—'you may be sure your sin will find you out' (Numbers 32:23).

They brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar... to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment (מִשְׁפָּטִים, mishpatim)—Riblah (200 miles north) was Nebuchadnezzar's military headquarters. The word mishpatim denotes authoritative legal sentence. The covenant-breaking king faced pagan judgment because he rejected the Lord's mishpat through Jeremiah. God's warnings are not negotiable.

Historical Context

Riblah in the land of Hamath (modern Syria) was strategically located on the Orontes River, serving as Nebuchadnezzar's forward command center for western campaigns. Pharaoh Neco had earlier used Riblah as his base (2 Kings 23:33). The

200-mile journey northward would have been humiliating for Zedekiah, paraded as a defeated rebel before his captor.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Zedekiah's capture near Jericho contrast Joshua's victory and warn against presuming on past grace?
2. What does it mean to face judgment from earthly authorities because you first rejected God's authority?
3. How does Christ absorb divine judgment in our place so we need never face condemnation (Romans 8:1)?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּדְפּוּ	חֵיל	כַּשְׂדִּים	אַחֲרֵיהֶם	וַיֵּשׁ גּוֹ	אֶת
pursued	army	But the Chaldeans	after	them and overtook	H853
H7291	H2428	H3778	H310	H5381	
צִדְקִיָּהוּ	בְּעָרְבֹת	יְרִיחוֹ	וַיִּקְחוּ	אֶת	
Zedekiah	in the plains	of Jericho	and when they had taken	H853	
H6667	H6160	H3405	H3947		
וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ	אֶל	נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר	מֶלֶךְ	בְּבָבֶל	רִבְלָה
him they brought him up	H413	to Nebuchadnezzar	king	of Babylon	to Riblah
H5927		H5019	H4428	H894	H7247
בְּאֶרֶץ	חַמָּת	וַיִּדֹּב	אֶת	מִשְׁפָּטִים:	
in the land	of Hamath	where he gave	H853	judgment	
H776	H2574	H1696		H4941	

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 23:33 (Kingdom): And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

Joshua 5:10 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

Jeremiah 38:23 (Kingdom): So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

Jeremiah 38:18 (Kingdom): But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

Joshua 4:13 (Parallel theme): About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

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