

# 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** (בְּעַרְבֹּת יְרִיחֹו, 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* (נִשְׁגַּג, '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** (מִשְׁפָטִים, 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

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**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

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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

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אָתָּה וַיָּשֶׁב גּוֹן אַחֲרֵיכֶם פָּשָׁד יְמֵינוֹ וַיַּךְפֵּן  
pursued army But the Chaldeans after them and overtook H853  
H7291 H2428 H3778 H310 H5381

אָתָּה וַיַּקְרַב וְתַּחֲזִק יְרֵחוֹ בְּעָרֶב וְתַּחֲזִק צָדְקָהוּ  
Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho and when they had taken H853  
H6667 H6160 H3405 H3947

רַבָּל מִתְהָבֵל בְּבָבִילוֹן אֶל מֶלֶךְ בְּבָבִילוֹן  
him they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah  
H5927 H413 H5019 H4428 H894 H7247

מִשְׁפָטִים אָתָּה יְדִיבֵר בְּאֶרֶץ חֶמֶת וְיִדְבֵּר  
in the land of Hamath where he gave judgment  
H776 H2574 H1696 H853 H4941

## Additional Cross-References

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**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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