

# Jeremiah in the Cistern

For speaking God's truth during the siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah is thrown into a muddy cistern to die. An Ethiopian official bravely rescues him.

Jeremiah 38:1-13

CHARACTERS: Jeremiah, King Zedekiah, Ebed-Melech, The Officials

THEMES: Persecution, Courage, Faithfulness, Rescue

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JEREMIAH HAD BEEN prophesying for decades, warning Judah that judgment was coming because of their sins. Now Babylon's army surrounded Jerusalem, and Jeremiah continued to speak God's message: 'Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine, or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians will live.'

The officials came to King Zedekiah. 'This man should be put to death! He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin.'

King Zedekiah was weak and feared these powerful men. 'He is in your hands,' the king said. 'The king can do nothing to oppose you.'

So they took Jeremiah and lowered him by ropes into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. There was no water in the cistern—only mud—and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. They left him there to die.

But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite official in the royal palace, heard what they had done to Jeremiah. He went to the king, who was sitting in the Benjamin Gate. 'My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death.'

The king commanded Ebed-Melech, 'Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.'

Ebed-Melech took the men and went to the palace to get old rags and worn-out clothes. He lowered them by ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern. He told Jeremiah, 'Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes.' Jeremiah did so.

They pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard, continuing his ministry until Jerusalem fell to Babylon.

Ebed-Melech's courage saved a prophet's life. Later, God sent a special message through Jeremiah promising that Ebed-Melech would survive Jerusalem's fall because he trusted in the Lord.