

6/1/25

Sermon Title: The True Prophet Jeremiah

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 37:1-21

(Jeremiah 37:1) Zedekiah son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he reigned in place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim.

(Jeremiah 37:2) Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the LORD had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

(Jeremiah 37:3) King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehukal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: "Please pray to the LORD our God for us."

(Jeremiah 37:4) Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison.

(Jeremiah 37:5) Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

(Jeremiah 37:6) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet:

(Jeremiah 37:7) "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, 'Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt.

(Jeremiah 37:8) Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.'

(Jeremiah 37:9) "This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, 'The Babylonians will surely leave us.' They will not! "

(Jeremiah 37:10) Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian<sup>[c]</sup> army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down."

(Jeremiah 37:11) After the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army,

(Jeremiah 37:12)Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there. <sup>1</sup>

(Jeremiah 37:13) But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, arrested him and said, “You are deserting to the Babylonians!”

(Jeremiah 37:14)“That’s not true!” Jeremiah said. “I am not deserting to the Babylonians.” But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

(Jeremiah 37:15)They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison.

(Jeremiah 37:16)Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.

(Jeremiah 37:17) Then King Zedekiah sent for him and had him brought to the palace, where he asked him privately, “Is there any word from the LORD?”

“Yes,” Jeremiah replied, “you will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon.”

(Jeremiah 37:18) Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What crime have I committed against you or your attendants or this people, that you have put me in prison?

(Jeremiah 37:19) Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, ‘The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land’?

(Jeremiah 37:20) But now, my lord the king, please listen. Let me bring my petition before you: Do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, or I will die there.”

(Jeremiah 37:21)King Zedekiah then gave orders for Jeremiah to be placed in the courtyard of the guard and given a loaf of bread from the street of the bakers each day until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

When King Jehoiakim threw into the fire and completely burned the scroll on which were written all the words the prophet Jeremiah had spoken concerning Israel, Judah, and all the other nations, the Lord declared judgment against him. (Jeremiah 36:30) Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.

(Jeremiah 36:31) I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.”

God’s judgment was fulfilled just as He had spoken.

King Jehoiakim was taken to Babylon and died there; his body was discarded without being buried.

His descendants did not inherit the throne.

After Jehoiakim’s death in 597 BC, his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king, but only for about three months.

Babylon invaded again, deposed Jehoiachin, and took him into exile.

The throne then passed to his uncle Zedekiah.

The passage deals with events that occurred after Jehoiachin had been taken into exile in Babylon and during the reign of King Zedekiah.

(Jeremiah 37:1) Zedekiah son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he reigned in place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim.

Let us look at how King Zedekiah came to the throne after Coniah (King Jehoiachin), along with the historical background.

The kingdom of Judah began to decline after the reign of King Hezekiah.

His son, King Manasseh, and his grandson, King Amon, were among the most evil kings in Judah’s history.

They worshiped idols and committed deeds even more wicked than those of the ancient Amorites.

Although God repeatedly sent prophets to warn them of impending destruction and to urge them to turn from their evil ways, they ignored these warnings and did not repent.

During the reign of King Josiah, there seemed to be a brief return to God, but after Josiah was killed in battle against Egypt, the people once again turned to evil, accelerating Judah's downfall.

Josiah's fourth son, Jehoahaz, succeeded him on the throne, but was forcibly deposed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt after only three months.

Josiah's second son, Jehoiakim, was then installed as king, but he too was later deposed by Babylon.

King Jehoiakim, like Manasseh and Jehoahaz, was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

He worshipped idols and refused to listen to God's word.

Even when the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed God's warnings, he not only refused to repent but even tried to kill Jeremiah.

His foreign policy was also inconsistent and incompetent—he vacillated between serving Egypt and Babylon.

As a result, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah, leading armies from Chaldea, Aram, Moab, and the Ammonites, and took Jehoiakim away in chains to Babylon (in 602 BC, the first Babylonian captivity).

In 598 BC, after Jehoiakim's death, his 8-year-old son Jehoiachin ascended the throne, but within just three months, Babylon invaded again and took him, his mother, and the officials into captivity (in 597 BC, the second Babylonian captivity).

Jehoiachin's mother and officials were also taken to Babylon because, since the king was young, they had served as regents—and they had antagonized Babylon by offering tribute to Egypt instead.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon then appointed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle and Josiah's third son, as king over Judah.

But he, too, did not listen to the words that the Lord had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 37:2) Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the LORD had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

What did God say to King Zedekiah through the prophet Jeremiah?

God's message was this: Because of the sins of Judah, they would face His judgment and be destroyed by Babylon.

Therefore, they should not resist but willingly submit and go into captivity.

However, King Zedekiah and the people did not listen to the words of the prophet Jeremiah.

Instead, they followed the false prophecies of peace proclaimed by false prophets and resisted Babylon.

Notably, Zedekiah had been installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Yet he betrayed Babylon by allying himself with neighboring small nations and serving Egypt, thus resisting Babylon.

This act of betrayal was a breach of the vassal treaty and a direct affront to the authority of Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him king over Judah.

As a result, Nebuchadnezzar launched an invasion of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem.

However, when Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt heard this news, he set out on a campaign to rescue the besieged city of Jerusalem (in 588 BC), and upon hearing this, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon temporarily withdrew his forces from Jerusalem.

In response to this development, King Zedekiah sent envoys to Jeremiah, asking him to pray to God on their behalf.

Ironically, although he refused to obey God's word, Zedekiah still referred to the Lord as *"our God."*

(Jeremiah 37:3) King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehukal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: "Please pray to the LORD our God for us."

(Jeremiah 37:4) Now Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison.

(Jeremiah 37:5) Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

However, through Jeremiah, God firmly declared to King Zedekiah that the Egyptian army would return to their own land, Egypt, and the Babylonian army would come back to attack and burn the city of Jerusalem.

(Jeremiah 37:6) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet:

(Jeremiah 37:7) "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, 'Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt.

(Jeremiah 37:8) Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.'

This was a warning that Judah's attempt to avoid Babylon's invasion through human means would ultimately fail.

When the Babylonian army temporarily withdrew, false prophets loudly proclaimed deliverance from Babylon.

However, God warned the people not to be elated by this temporary relief, declaring that Jerusalem would surely be destroyed.

Rather than relying on God and obeying His word, King Zedekiah and the people of Judah put their trust in powerful neighboring nations.

To King Zedekiah and the people of Judah, who relied on surrounding superpowers rather than trusting in God and following His word, God made it clear that human strategies would not be able to save them.

(Jeremiah 37:9) “This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, ‘The Babylonians will surely leave us.’ They will not! <sup>1</sup>

(Jeremiah 37:10) Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian<sup>[c]</sup> army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down.”

The destruction of Judah was already determined by God and therefore unavoidable.

In the ninth year of King Zedekiah’s reign, Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar launched an invasion against Judah.

Although the people of Judah fought back fiercely for three years, the kingdom ultimately fell and was completely destroyed in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah’s proclamation poured cold water on the people’s expectations.

As a result, the people of Judah arrested and imprisoned Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 37:11) After the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army,

(Jeremiah 37:12) Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there. <sup>1</sup>

(Jeremiah 37:13) But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, arrested him and said, “You are deserting to the Babylonians!”

(Jeremiah 37:14) “That’s not true!” Jeremiah said. “I am not deserting to the Babylonians.” But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

(Jeremiah 37:15) They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison.

Taking advantage of the Babylonian army's withdrawal, which allowed free movement in and out of Jerusalem, Jeremiah set out to go to his hometown in the territory of Benjamin to receive his allotted inheritance.

It appears he was trying to settle the matter regarding his cousin Hanamel's request to redeem the family property, which had come up while Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guard.

However, when Jeremiah reached the Benjamin Gate, he was stopped by Irijah, son of Shelemiah, the captain of the guard.

Irijah mistakenly thought Jeremiah was defecting to the Babylonians, in line with the message he had often preached.

The Benjamin Gate was the gate on the north side of Jerusalem that led to the territory of Benjamin.

Since many people who believed Jeremiah's prophecy were indeed leaving the city through that gate to surrender to the Babylonians, Irijah likely saw Jeremiah's departure as suspicious.

Though Jeremiah insisted he was not going to surrender to the Babylonians, Irijah did not believe him.

He arrested Jeremiah and brought him before the officials.

The officials were enraged when they saw Jeremiah, beat him, and threw him into prison.

After many days in confinement, King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and had him brought to the palace.

In private, the king asked him whether there was any new word from the Lord.

(Jeremiah 37:16) Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.



(Jeremiah 37:17) Then King Zedekiah sent for him and had him brought to the palace, where he asked him privately, “Is there any word from the LORD?”

“Yes,” Jeremiah replied, “you will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon.”

King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah if there was any new word from the Lord because he hoped that, although Jeremiah had previously prophesied Judah's destruction, now that the Babylonian army had withdrawn, he might perhaps proclaim Judah's restoration and the preservation of his own kingship.

However, contrary to the king's expectations, Jeremiah replied that he would indeed be handed over to the king of Babylon.

He then appealed to the king, questioning the reason for his imprisonment.

(Jeremiah 37:18) Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What crime have I committed against you or your attendants or this people, that you have put me in prison?”

(Jeremiah 37:19) Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, ‘The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land’?

Jeremiah asserted that he had committed no offense against the king, his officials, or the people of Judah.

Moreover, he challenged the king by asking, “Where are your prophets who prophesied to you that the king of Babylon would not attack you or this land?”

In doing so, he exposed the injustice of the situation: the true prophet who spoke God's word was imprisoned, while the false prophets—who should have been punished—faced no consequences.

Proclaiming his innocence, Jeremiah pleaded with the king not to send him back to the underground dungeon in the house of Jonathan.

For the first and last time, King Zedekiah granted Jeremiah's request.

(Jeremiah 37:20) But now, my lord the king, please listen. Let me bring my petition before you: Do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, or I will die there.”

(Jeremiah 37:21) King Zedekiah then gave orders for Jeremiah to be placed in the courtyard of the guard and given a loaf of bread from the street of the bakers each day until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

King Zedekiah had Jeremiah moved to the courtyard of the guard and ordered that he be given a loaf of bread each day to sustain him.

Jeremiah remained there until the day Jerusalem fell, and after the city’s fall, he was released by the occupying Babylonian army.

Beloved members of Church of God Dreams,

At that time, many self-proclaimed prophets in Judah spoke flattering lies that pleased the king and the people.

And the king, along with the people, followed those false prophets whose messages aligned with their own interests.

Furthermore, they sought to kill Jeremiah, the true prophet who spoke words that offended their ears, and even threw him into an underground prison.

Yet, Jeremiah, the true prophet, did not falter.

Even when his life was in danger, he did not speak to please the king or the people, nor did he compromise to escape his situation.

He faithfully delivered only the word of God.

He was a true man of God, unafraid of the world.

“You, man of God!”

Whenever God calls me by this name, my heart swells with reverence and resolve. It strengthens my determination to remain unwavering and to live sincerely as one who belongs to Him, no matter what the world brings.

(1 Timothy 6:11) But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

(1 Timothy 6:12) Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

(1 Timothy 6:13) In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you

(1 Timothy 6:14) to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(1 Timothy 6:15) which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

(1 Timothy 6:16) who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Keep fighting the good fight of faith.

Let us live to proclaim only Jesus Christ, the Truth!