***Jeremiah 37:1-12 Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. 3And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Pray now to the Lord our God for us.” 4Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. 5Then Pharaoh’s army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. 8And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.” 9Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will surely depart from us,” for they will not depart. 10For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.’***

***11And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh’s army, 12that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people.***

Tonight, we join Jeremiah, as he once again shows himself faithful to God. The year is about 588 BC. Jerusalem has already been sacked once by the Babylonians. Jehoiakim, the king that we dealt with last week, has been deposed. Jeconiah, also known as Coniah, has been deposed as well. King Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne, intending for him to be a puppet king. Zedekiah started his reign in 597 BC and it ended with the burning of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Zedekiah rebelled sometime around 588 BC and this has drawn the wrath of the Chaldean army, led by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 37 gives additional color to the time that we studied in Jeremiah 32. This is not a contradiction, as Jeremiah is not aligned in chronological order.

Verses 1-2 *Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah.* ***Zedekiah****, whom Nebuchadrezzar made king* – in place of Jeconiah or Coniah (which seems to be a nickname or shortened name), (He’s also known as Jehoiachin) as this verse calls him *–* in 2 Kings 24:17, we read that Zedekiah was renamed by Nebuchadnezzar. His name was Mattaniah before, and he is brother to Jehoiakim. He was what is known as a tributary king. He took an oath to pay tribute and homage to the king of Babylon. History remembers him as a feeble, weak, and indecisive king – one that went whichever the wind seemed to be blowing. He did not live a pious life like his father Josiah. *But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord –* He and his court saw the fatal results of Jehoiakim failing to heed the word of God through Jeremiah. For 20 years, they have had the benefit of Jeremiah’s prophecies, many of which have already started being fulfilled. Yet, they would not heed. He, nor his servants, nor the people of the land. People love their sin. No matter the warnings, many will continue in deception, until it is everlasting too late.

Verses 3-5 *And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Pray now to the Lord our God for us.” 4Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. 5Then Pharaoh’s army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem.* ***Zedekiah*** *sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah –* Recall with me that in Jeremiah 21, it was Pashur that came to Jeremiah, on behalf of Zedekiah and sought Jeremiah. We’ll meet Pashur again in Jeremiah 38 if I recall. For now, Jehucal calls on Jeremiah. Jehucal says – pray now to the Lord our God for us. Just because a wicked man asks for prayer, it doesn’t mean he is no longer a wicked man. No. Evil men and evil women ask for prayer in distress, but not in repentance. They do not regard the admonition or the counsel when things are going in their favor, and they seem to be prospering. *Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people –* Jeremiah was not yet in prison (we saw that in Jeremiah 32 and we’ll see it in verse 15 later. The people of Jerusalem were also moving about freely. Pharoah’s army was approaching, and the Chaldeans were in a strategic retreat from the siege they’d been waging against Jerusalem. *Then Pharaoh’s army came up from Egypt –* Zedekiah had sworn an oath of tribute and allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. Now, he breaks that oath and makes an alliance with the king of Egypt. We see the Egyptian army now on the move. Ezekiel 17:15 confirms this. The Chaldeans see the threat and go to meet the Egyptian army, thereby relieving the siege. Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah to seek prayers that the city will be saved.

Verses 6-10 *Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. 8And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.” 9Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will surely depart from us,” for they will not depart. 10For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.’*  Now, we receive the word of the Lord - *Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land –* The Egyptian army will be forced to retreat to their own land by the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans, 2 Kings 24:7 tells us, will take all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates rivers. The Egyptians are pinned in their own land, trying to hold it.*And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire –* The Chaldeans will turn, come back, and renew the siege. They will take the city and burn it with fire. They’ll be fueled by the anger that Zedekiah rebelled in such a way and will execute their siege even more cruelly. God’s word will be accomplished, as He commanded in Jeremiah 34:22. This is God’s sentence. The Chaldeans just happen to be the tool He has chosen. *Do not deceive yourselves –* The Jews were rejoicing at the reprieve of the Chaldeans retreating, thinking it similar to the time of Hezekiah and the Assyrians. God says no. Don’t be deceived. God is against the city. Even if the whole army of the Chaldeans had been smitten and lost, that which remained – lame, wounded, injured – would still be sufficient to capture and burn the city. It is God that fights against Jerusalem. The Chaldeans are the hammer in His hand. When God ordains, who among men can rescue?

Verse 11 *And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh’s army –* This has the idea that the army left the siege and went, at the news of the Egyptian army on the move, to see why the Egyptians were coming that way. This was a strategic move pure and simple. It did not end well for the Egyptians. What is amazing is that, back in 609 BC, it had been Pharoah Necho II who killed King Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo. Now, Pharoah Hophra is the one that Zedekiah, Josiah’s son, makes an alliance with against the Chaldeans. Sin makes for strange bedfellows.

Verse 12 *that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people.* ***Then*** *Jeremiah went forth –* Jeremiah now goes into the land of Benjamin. He has no further word from God that we know of at this time. He knows that Jerusalem will soon be taken and burned, so he uses this opportunity to go into his own country. This is Anathoth. Likely, Jeremiah was owed rent or money for the use of land that he possessed. The Chaldeans have had Anathoth cut off from Jerusalem for a while. Likely, there were people growing crops and using his land that he had not been able to collect from for a while. Jeremiah knows, straight from God, that the window open now, with the Chaldeans pursuing the Egyptians, will soon close.

And so we will leave Jeremiah again tonight, as he journeys to Anathoth, knowing that God has ordained the destruction of Jerusalem, and that this will be accomplished. In our next meeting, we will see that God does accomplish His divine will. Jeremiah knows the promises and lives toward the promises. He doesn’t change his faithfulness day by day. He lives by the promises that God has made. Likewise, we must live by the promises that God has made. Times change, news changes, culture changes – God is forever, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Jesus promised He will never leave us nor forsake us – let’s live in that promise. Jesus promised He is preparing a place for us – let’s live in that promise. Jesus promised He is coming again – let’s live in that promise, every single day.