

Jeremiah is Persecuted and Offers His Complaint to the Lord

Jeremiah 20

Outline

- 1-6 | Pashhur, the chief temple official, persecutes Jeremiah; Jeremiah prophesies about Pashhur's future—death of neighbors and his captivity
- 7-13 | Jeremiah shares his concerns with the Lord
- 14-18 | Jeremiah expresses his wish that he had never been born because of the persecution

Reflections

At the end of chapter 19, Jeremiah had returned to Jerusalem and was standing in the courtyard of the temple proclaiming the destruction and captivity that the Lord had planned for Jerusalem and the inhabitants of the land. It is important to understand the significance of Jeremiah's proclaiming in the courtyard.

It was within the courtyard that many of the required religious activities took place including offering the morning and evening sacrifices. Also many people would bring their various offerings and sacrifices daily as needed. So when Jeremiah entered the court, there were probably a large number of people there to hear the message that God had for the nation.

Among those present was the chief officer of the house of the Lord, Pashhur. Upon hearing Jeremiah's prophecy, Pashhur had him put in stocks by the upper Benjamin Gate. It's exact location is not shown on any maps of ancient Jerusalem I've looked at but from the text it was next to the house of the Lord, probably to the North, since that is where the tribal lands of Benjamin are in relation to the city.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary¹ thinks that this might refer either a device or to a prison building. According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary², this was the first instance of open opposition against Jeremiah. Now I'm speculating here, but it was probably located next to a major thoroughfare of the city which would allow many people to view Jeremiah being held in the stocks. Wherever the location, Jeremiah was only held one day and released on the next day.

Upon His release, Jeremiah spoke out against Pashhur. He begins by giving him a new name, Magor-missabib (*māghōr misabib*) which means "terror on every side." The NLT translates his name like this, "The Man Who Lives in Terror." This name becomes descriptive of the condition of the people during the time of Pashhur's life because during it, Jerusalem was conquered and the people taken into captivity and Pashhur and his friends will die and be buried in Babylon.

Then Jeremiah offers up a prayer in poetic form outlining his own worries and frustration over this man Pashhur, calling for his demise. Jeremiah even wishes that he personally had never been born. I'm sure that most people would feel that way about impending doom being spoken about them and their circumstances.

There are millions of people each day who face similar experiences of persecution and imprisonment. If you would like to know more about them, [Voice of the Martyrs](#) is one site where you can go to find out more about the various people who are suffering for their faith in Jesus. We have it pretty easy, relatively speaking, with regard to persecution. Although it is getting increasingly more hostile toward people of faith. Thankfully, no matter what our circumstances, we know that God is greater.

Most of us have never experienced this type of persecution but most of us who have taken a stand for our faith have experienced something similar but to a lesser degree. Jesus would have us respond

1 Walton, John H. et al. *IVP Bible Background Commentary*. InterVarsity Press; e-Sword, 2000.

2 Walvoord, John, and Roy Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty: Old & New Testament*. Victor Books; e-Sword, 1983.

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differently than how Jeremiah responded, but then his times were different and he had a different message from God to deliver, Jerusalem and Judah's destruction and captivity.

Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies and do good on their behalf. Not an easy commandment to follow though. Do you have people whom you think might be spiritually harassing you to the point that it feels like persecution? Pray for God to change their heart and transform their minds.

Lord God, King of the Universe. There is nothing that is impossible with You and we pray for our hearts to molded by You to be able to express Your love for to those who would oppose us and You by default. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Key Words: Old Testament, Prophecy, Jeremiah, Pashhur, Persecution, Prayer

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