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JEREMIAH 37: 1 Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king, instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

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Zedekiah succeeds Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, in the Jewish throne, and does that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, Jer 37:1, Jer 37:2. The king sends a message to Jeremiah, Jer 37:3-5. God suggests an answer; and foretells the return of the Chaldean army, who should most assuredly take and burn the city, Jer 37:6-10. Jeremiah, in attempting to leave this devoted city, and retire to his possession in the country, is seized as a deserter, and cast into a dungeon, Jer 37:11-15. The king, after a conference with him, abates the rigour of his confinement, Jer 37:16-21.

Verse 1

And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah - Of the siege and taking of Jerusalem referred to here, and the making of Zedekiah king instead of Jeconiah, see 2Kgs 24:1 (note), etc., and the notes there.

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JEREMIAH 37: 2 But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, listened to the LORD's words, which he spoke by the prophet Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH 37: 3 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.

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Verse 3

Zedekiah - to the prophet Jeremiah - He was willing to hear a message from the Lord, provided it were according to his own mind. He did not fully trust in his own prophets.

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JEREMIAH 37: 4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison.

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Verse 4

Now Jeremiah came in and went out - After the siege was raised, he had a measure of liberty; he was not closely confined, as he afterwards was. See Jer 37:16.

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JEREMIAH 37: 5 Pharaoh's army had come out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they broke up from Jerusalem.

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Verse 5

Then Pharaoh's army - This was Pharaoh-hophra or Apries, who then reigned in Egypt in place of his father Necho. See Eze 29:6, etc. Nebuchadnezzar, hearing that the Egyptian army, on which the Jews

so much depended, was on their march to relieve the city, suddenly raised the siege, and went to meet them. In the interim Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord to know whether they might consider themselves in safety.

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JEREMIAH 37: 6 Then came the LORD's word to the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

JEREMIAH 37: 7 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, You shall tell the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which has come out to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

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Verse 7

Pharaoh's army - shall return to Egypt - They were defeated by the Chaldeans; and, not being hearty in the cause, returned immediately to Egypt, leaving Nebuchadnezzar unmolested to recommence the siege.

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JEREMIAH 37: 8 The Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire.

JEREMIAH 37: 9 Thus says the LORD, Don't deceive yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart.

JEREMIAH 37: 10 For though you had struck the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

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Verse 10

For though ye had smitten the whole army - Strong words; but they show how fully God was determined to give up this city to fire and sword, and how fully he had instructed his prophet on this point.

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JEREMIAH 37: 11 When the army of the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

JEREMIAH 37: 12 then Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people.

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Verse 12

JEREMIAHemiah went forth - At the time that Nebuchadnezzar had raised the siege, and gone to meet the Egyptian army.

Go into the land of Benjamin - To Anathoth, his native city.

To separate himself thence - "To receive a portion thereof among the people;" - Blayney: who supposes that Jeremiah went to receive a portion of the proceeds of his patrimony at Anathoth, which had, previously to the siege, been in the hands of the Chaldeans. The siege being now raised, he thought of looking thus after his own affairs. The Chaldee is to the same sense. "He went that he might divide the inheritance which he had there among the people." Dahler translates, "He went to withdraw himself from the siege, as many others of the inhabitants." I believe he went to withdraw himself from a city devoted to destruction, and in which he could no longer do any good.

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JEREMIAH 37: 13 When he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, You are falling away to the Chaldeans.

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Verse 13

Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans - Thou art a deserter, and a traitor to thy country. As he had always declared that the Chaldeans should take the city, etc., his enemies took occasion from this to say he was in the interest of the Chaldeans, and that he wished now to go to them, and betray the place.

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JEREMIAH 37: 14 Then Jeremiah said, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he didn't listen to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

JEREMIAH 37: 15 The princes were angry with Jeremiah, and struck him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

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Verse 15

And smote him - Without any proof of the alleged treachery, without any form of justice.

In prison to the house of Jonathan - In Asiatic countries there is an apartment in the houses of the officers of the law, to confine all the accused that are brought before them. Jonathan was a scribe or secretary, and had a prison of this kind in his house.

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JEREMIAH 37: 16 When Jeremiah had come into the dungeon house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

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Verse 16

Entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins - The dungeon was probably a deep pit; and the cabins or cells, niches in the sides, where different malefactors were confined. See Blayney.

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JEREMIAH 37: 17 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

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Verse 17

Is there any word from the Lord? - Is there any farther revelation?

There is: - thou shalt be delivered - What bold faithfulness! And to a king, in whose hands his life now lay.

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JEREMIAH 37: 18 Moreover Jeremiah said to king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison?

JEREMIAH 37: 19 Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

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Verse 19

Where are now your prophets - They told you that the Chaldeans should not come; I told you they would. According to my word the Chaldeans are come, and are departed only for a short time.

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JEREMIAH 37: 20 Now please hear, my lord the king: please let my supplication be presented before you, that you not cause me to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

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Verse 20

Cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan - He had been ill used in this man's custody, so as to endanger his life, the place being cold, and probably unhealthy.

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JEREMIAH 37: 21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

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Verse 21

Then Zedekiah - the court of the prison - Was contiguous to the king's house, where the prisoners could readily see their friends.

Give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street - From the public stores; which he received till all the provisions were spent.

