

The Man of Sorrows

Jeremiah 37-38

90 minutes · Win, Build, Send inductive format · Thread 2 resolves tonight

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. Tonight the study's longest-hidden thread comes out of hiding. Participants walk Jeremiah's darkest road, arrest, beating, dungeon, and the mire of the cistern, and then assemble, with their own hands, the composite portrait this book has been painting for eleven weeks. Then they open Matthew 16 and discover that when Jesus asked "Who do men say that the Son of man is?", the answer reported to Him carried one writing prophet's name: Jeremiah. They finish by finding the differences that matter even more than the parallels: the type suffers and is lifted out; the Fulfillment goes all the way down, and through.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church reads the two Testaments as one divine plan, illuminated by typology: persons and events of the Old Covenant as real prefigurations of Christ (CCC 128-130). In St. Augustine's words, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New (CCC 129).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **The last king's squirming.** Chapters 37-38 belong to Zedekiah's final years: a king who keeps summoning Jeremiah secretly ("Is there any word from the LORD?", 37:17), believes him enough to be terrified, and never once obeys. He fears the princes, fears the deserters (38:19), fears everyone except God quite enough. Zedekiah is the tragedy of the almost-persuaded.
- **Arrest and dungeon.** During a lull in the siege Jeremiah is seized at the Benjamin Gate on a false charge of deserting, beaten, and held "many days" in a cistern-house dungeon (37:11-16). The charge is false but plausible: he had, after all, preached surrender. Prophets get destroyed on plausible misreadings of their own words. Remember that when a later trial produces witnesses about destroying a temple.
- **The cistern.** Chapter 38: the princes demand his death, "for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers" (38:4), and Zedekiah hands him over with the most spineless sentence in the book: "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you" (38:5). They lower him by ropes into the cistern of Malchiah: "And there was no water in the cistern, but only mire, and Jeremiah sank in the mire" (38:6). Remember Session 2: Jeremiah, the preacher of broken cisterns, is thrown into one to die. The people rejected the fountain and threw the messenger into a cistern; the geography of the whole book collapses into one pit.
- **The Gentile rescuer.** The one man who acts is Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, a foreigner in the king's house, who confronts the king and hauls the prophet up with ropes and old rags to pad his arms (38:7-13): mercy with logistics. God later exempts him from the catastrophe by name: "because you

have put your trust in me” (39:18). The first hands of rescue belong to a Gentile; file it under the nations streaming in.

- **The composite portrait.** Tonight’s central exercise (Q5) has the group assemble everything this study has gathered: known and consecrated before birth (1:5); a priest’s family from a village near Jerusalem; commanded to remain unmarried as a sign (16:2); weeping for the slain of his people (9:1); preaching against the Temple and nearly executed for it (7, 26); plotted against by his own hometown (11:21); “a gentle lamb led to the slaughter” whose enemies would “cut him off from the land of the living” (11:19); watched for his fall by familiar friends (20:10); handed a cup of wrath (25:15); tried before rulers, beaten, sunk in the pit. Let them build it before you name the destination.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Roots. The mire of the cistern has a psalm: “I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold” (Psalm 69:2, 14), and Psalm 69 becomes one of the Passion’s chief psalms: “zeal for thy house has consumed me” (John 2:17) and the vinegar for thirst (69:21). The pit as the place of the righteous sufferer runs through Psalm 88 and Joseph’s cistern (Genesis 37:24). And Jeremiah 11:19, the gentle lamb led to slaughter, cut off from the land of the living, stands beside Isaiah 53:7-8 as the Old Testament’s clearest sketch of the innocent one whose death is plotted.

Fulfillment. Matthew 16:13-14 is tonight’s destination, and the group must reach it themselves: the crowds, asked who the Son of man is, answer “Jeremiah or one of the prophets”, the only writing prophet they name. The full parallels unfold across the Gospels, some after that day at Caesarea Philippi: Jesus wept over the city (Luke 19:41), was rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:28-29), confronted the Temple with Jeremiah’s own sentence (Matthew 21:13), was betrayed by a familiar friend, tried on garbled Temple-words (Matthew 26:61), and handed the cup (Matthew 26:39). Then the differences, which are the Gospel: Jeremiah lamented; Christ, often silent before His accusers, prayed for them. Jeremiah was lifted out of the pit alive; Christ went down into death itself, and came up on the third day with the pit’s keys.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *Quoted at CCC 129*

St. Augustine gave the Church her golden rule for reading the two Testaments: the New lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New. Jeremiah’s life is that rule in flesh: a real man, really suffering, in whose true story the Church’s typological reading lets us see God sketching Another. Typology is not a trick of interpretation. It is the signature of a single Author across both Testaments.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Melito of Sardis · *On Pascha, second century*

One of the Church's earliest preachers, St. Melito taught that Christ was present in figure all through the old story: slain in Abel, bound in Isaac, sold in Joseph, persecuted in the prophets. The Old Testament, he preached, is a sketchbook of the Passion, drawn in the lives of real sufferers so that when the Suffering One came, His people might recognize the face.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) · *The Science of the Cross and her testament*

A Jewish philosopher who became a Carmelite, St. Teresa Benedicta taught in *The Science of the Cross* that the cross is truly known only from within, by sharing it with Christ; and in her testament she offered her life to God, an offering she completed at Auschwitz. The pattern of Jeremiah, the faithful one who suffers with and for a people who reject the message, did not end in the first century. It is the standing shape of prophetic love.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 128-130** · typology: the Church reads the unity of God's plan in both Testaments; the old prefigures what God accomplished in Christ, without emptying the old of its own value.
- **CCC 129** · St. Augustine's rule: the New hidden in the Old, the Old unveiled in the New.
- **CCC 601** · the Scriptures foretold the divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of the righteous one, the suffering Servant.

THREAD WATCH

THREAD WATCH · LEADER ONLY · THREAD 2 RESOLVES TONIGHT

Thread 2 · The Prophet Like Jeremiah: RESOLVES TONIGHT. Eleven weeks of breadcrumbs come home. The choreography of Q5-Q6 matters: the group assembles the composite portrait FIRST, from their own memory of this study, before anyone opens Matthew 16. When they then find the crowds answering "Jeremiah," the discovery belongs to them: they will have independently reproduced the first-century crowd's perception. Do not name Matthew 16 before Q6. If someone jumps ahead, grin and hold the room to the order.

Thread 1 and Thread 3. Resolved and resting. Next week gathers all three for the finale; tonight belongs entirely to Thread 2.

SESSION GOALS

1. Participants can retell chapters 37-38: the arrest, Zedekiah's secret consultations, the cistern, and Ebed-melech.
2. Participants assemble the composite portrait of Jeremiah from the whole study, unprompted by the destination.

3. Participants discover Matthew 16:14 themselves and can explain why first-century crowds saw Jeremiah in Jesus.
4. Participants hear the “typology is reading-back” objection at full strength and can answer it from Christ’s own hermeneutic and CCC 128-130.
5. Participants can name the differences that exceed the parallels: where the type was rescued, the Fulfillment descended, and rose.

TIME NOTE (90 MINUTES)

Opening prayer and Win: 12 minutes. Build: 60 minutes. Send and Live It This Week: 13 minutes. Closing prayer and memory verse: 5 minutes.

If you are running long: compress Question 1 (Zedekiah) into its answer summary and trim Question 8 (Psalm 69) to the single verse comparison. Never cut the composite exercise, the Matthew 16 discovery, or the differences question; they are the entire architecture of the night.

The Man of Sorrows

Jeremiah 37-38

OPENING PRAYER

"Father, tonight we follow Your prophet into the pit. Give us eyes to see what You were painting in his sufferings, and hearts that recognize the Face when the portrait is finished. Through Christ our Lord, who descended lower than any cistern and rose. Amen." (Opening Prayer)

WIN • OPENING QUESTIONS (12 MIN)

W1. Have you ever recognized someone from a description, a sketch, or a resemblance before ever meeting them? What made the recognition click?

W2. What is the difference between admiring someone who suffered for the truth and being willing to resemble them? Where does the difference show up in real life?

BUILD • INDUCTIVE STUDY (60 MIN)

READ JEREMIAH 37:11-17 ALOUD.

1. (*Compress if short on time.*) Two portraits in these verses. First Jeremiah: what is he charged with, is it true, and what happens to him? Then Zedekiah: what does he ask in secret, and what does his secrecy tell you?

ANSWER • SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jeremiah is seized on a false but plausible charge, deserting to the enemy he had told others to surrender to, beaten, and imprisoned many days (37:13-16). Prophets are rarely destroyed by outright lies; they are destroyed by plausible misreadings of their own words. And Zedekiah: he smuggles the prophet in to ask, "Is there any word from the LORD?" (37:17), believing enough to ask, too afraid to obey. The secret consultation is its own diagnosis: a conscience that must hide its appointments with the truth has already chosen against it, and is negotiating the terms.

READ JEREMIAH 38:1-6 ALOUD, AND LET VERSE 6 LAND IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT.

2. The princes' charge in 38:4, the king's answer in 38:5, and the pit in 38:6: take each in turn. What is the charge, what is Zedekiah's sentence-of-surrender, and what are the physical details of where Jeremiah ends up?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The charge: “he is weakening the hands of the soldiers” (38:4), the perennial charge against prophets: bad for morale. The king’s surrender: “Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you” (38:5), authority washing its hands of an innocent man to appease a mob; remember that posture, you will see it again on a Friday morning. And the pit: lowered by ropes into the cistern of Malchiah, no water, only mire, “and Jeremiah sank in the mire” (38:6). Left to die slowly, in the dark, in the mud, without anyone having to strike the blow.

- 3.** Think back to Session 2 and the sermon this whole book started with. What did Jeremiah preach that Israel had exchanged the fountain for? Now look where they put him. What has the geography of the book just done?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

They forsook the fountain of living waters and hewed out broken cisterns (2:13), and now they have thrown the man who said so into a broken cistern to die in it. The book’s geography collapses into a single image: the people’s spiritual choice becomes the prophet’s literal address. Reject the fountain long enough and you will end up disposing of the messenger in the very cistern he warned you about. Sin always finds it easier to bury the diagnosis than drink the cure.

READ JEREMIAH 38:7-13 ALOUD.

- 4.** One man in the entire government acts. Who is he, where is he from, and savor the details of how he does the rescue. Then check Jeremiah 39:15-18: what does God later say about him, and why?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, a Gentile serving in the king’s house, confronts the king publicly and leads the rescue with thirty men at his back (38:10): ropes, and old rags and worn-out clothes to pad the prophet’s armpits so the ropes will not tear him (38:11-12). Mercy with logistics: compassion that thinks about armpits. And God exempts him by name from the coming catastrophe, “because you have put your trust in me” (39:18). The first rescuing hands in this story are foreign hands. When the covenant insiders wanted the prophet dead, an outsider believed. The nations are already leaning into this story.

The Composite Portrait

- 5. The exercise this study has been waiting for.** As a group, from memory and your notes across all eleven weeks, build the full portrait of this man. Leader: write the list where all can see, prompting with the references below only as needed, and add tonight’s chapters last. Do not say where this is going.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The portrait, assembled: known and consecrated before birth (1:5); a priest's family, from a small town near Jerusalem; commanded to remain unmarried as a living sign (16:2); the prophet who wept for the slain of his people, "O that my head were waters" (9:1); who preached against the Temple in its own gate and was nearly executed for it (7; 26); whose own hometown plotted his death (11:21); who called himself "a gentle lamb led to the slaughter" whose enemies schemed to "cut him off from the land of the living" (11:19); watched for his fall by familiar friends (20:10); the bearer of the cup of God's wrath (25:15); tried before rulers, beaten by the Temple establishment, handed over by a governor-king who found no way to resist the mob, and lowered into the pit to die (20; 26; 37-38). When the list is complete, ask the room, and then go straight to Q6: does this portrait remind you of anyone?

6. Live discovery. The resolution. You were not the first to see it. Standing at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples what the crowds were saying about Him. Find Matthew 16:13-14 and read the crowd's answer aloud, every name.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). Jeremiah: the only writing prophet the crowds name. And mark when this was said: at Caesarea Philippi, mid-ministry, before the Passion, before the Temple confrontation, before the fullest parallels had even happened. Already the shape people saw in Jesus, the sorrowful prophet of judgment, unmarried, opposed by the establishment, was legible enough that they reached for this name before all the scroll-writers of Israel. Your group just reproduced that perception, independently, from the text, eleven weeks in the making. This is the question the study has been hiding since night one: why did people look at Jesus and see Jeremiah? Now they know: because, as the Church's typological reading lets us see, God had prepared in a prophet's whole life the sketch of Another.

Steelman: Is Typology Just Reading Christ Back Into the Text?

BUILD THE CASE AT FULL STRENGTH: PRESENT THIS AS A SHARP SKEPTICAL FRIEND WOULD

The case: "Impressive list. But humans are pattern-matching machines: give me any two tragic biographies and enough motivation and I will find you a dozen parallels. Jeremiah is about Jeremiah, a sixth-century prophet with a sixth-century message; the 'portrait of Christ' is Christian hindsight projected backward. The New Testament writers ransacked the Old for proof-texts, ripping verses from context. Respectable reading takes each text on its own terms and in its own century. Typology is eisegesis with incense." This objection lives inside many modern Catholics too. Present it at full strength.

7. First press: whose method is typology, originally? Who taught the Church to read this way, and what happened on the Emmaus road? And what does tonight's own discovery, Matthew 16:14, do to the "hindsight projection" theory?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The method is Christ's own: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27); "if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46); Jonah's three days as the sign of His own (Matthew 12:39-40). Reject typology and your quarrel is with the Teacher, not the students. And Matthew 16:14 is an early canonical datum that makes the hindsight-only theory hard to sustain: within the Gospel's own record, people saw Jeremiah in Jesus before the crucifixion, before any Christian had a motive to construct parallels. The report reaches us through an evangelist, so it cannot settle every historical question by itself; what it shows is that the resemblance was intelligible in real time, without Christian hindsight. Typology did not invent the pattern; it noticed it.

8. Second press: what makes typology more than coincidence-hunting? What does the Church actually claim about how the two Testaments relate, and what unique thing can God do that human authors cannot? For evidence, put Jeremiah in the mire (38:6) next to Psalm 69:2 and 69:21, and next to a detail from the cross.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Human authors write with words; God also writes with events, because He is the author of history itself. That is the Church's claim: the unity of the divine plan across both Testaments, in which persons and events really prefigure what God accomplishes in Christ, without losing their own historical reality (CCC 128-130); the New hidden in the Old, the Old unveiled in the New (CCC 129); the Scriptures foretold the plan of the suffering Righteous One (CCC 601). The evidence has texture: Jeremiah literally "sank in the mire" (38:6); Psalm 69 prays "I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold" (69:2), and that same psalm supplies the Passion its details, the zeal for God's house (John 2:17) and the vinegar for His thirst (Psalm 69:21). One psalm, one prophet's pit, one cross: three registers of a single Author's handwriting. Discipline is required, and the Church supplies it: types are confirmed by Scripture and the Church's reading, not by private ingenuity. But the phenomenon itself is as real as the crowds' answer at Caesarea Philippi.

9. Now the question that matters more than every parallel: the differences. Where the portrait and the Person diverge, the Gospel begins. Compare how Jeremiah responded to his persecutors (Session 5) with how Christ responded to His. And compare how each man's pit-story ends.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jeremiah lamented, accused God, called down judgment on his enemies, and cursed his own birthday, and all of that was honest prayer. Christ, who had more right to all of it, was often silent before His accusers, and prayed, "Father, forgive them." Jeremiah was hauled out of the cistern by ropes and rags, rescued alive from the edge of death. Christ was not rescued: He went all the way down, into death itself, the pit no ropes reach, and on the third day came up carrying its keys. The type is a sketch; sketches are outlines with the middle left empty. Jeremiah shows us the shape of the Suffering One. Only Christ fills it, exceeds it, and comes out the other side with the power to pull the rest of us up. The rags-and-ropes rescue of chapter 38 is a lovely mercy; the Resurrection is a

new creation.

10. Last one, and make it personal. St. Paul says we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, which means the pattern is now the family shape. Where in your life right now are you in the cistern, sinking, waiting? What does tonight's chapter, and its Fulfillment, promise you there?

ANSWER • SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Let the group speak; do not rush. The promises on the table tonight: the pit is seen (God's eye never left Jeremiah in the mire); rescue comes, sometimes through unexpected, foreign, unofficial hands, so stay alert for your Ebed-melech and be willing to be someone else's; and above all, the One we follow has been lower than any pit we will ever see, and owns the exit. "He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog" (Psalm 40:2) is now a family psalm. No cistern gets the last word in this story anymore.

SEND • CLOSING QUESTIONS (13 MIN)

S1. Now that you have seen the portrait and the Face, how does it change the way you will read the Old Testament from here on?

S2. Ebed-melech brought ropes and old rags: compassion with logistics. Who is in a cistern within your reach this week, and what are your ropes and rags?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Be someone's Ebed-melech this week: identify one person sinking, and do one concrete, logistical act of rescue: the ride, the meal, the call, the errand. Padding for the ropes counts.
- Pray Psalm 69 once this week, slowly, hearing it in three voices: Jeremiah's, Christ's, and your own.
- Reread Jeremiah 11:19 and Isaiah 53:7 side by side one evening, and end with a simple prayer of thanks to the Lamb who was not rescued so that you would be.

CLOSING PRAYER

"Lord Jesus, the crowds looked at You and saw Jeremiah, and tonight we finally see why. You wept his tears, bore his charges, drank his cup, and went down into a pit deeper than his, and You came up. Be with everyone here who is sinking. Send Your ropes and rags through us. And teach us to read all the Scriptures the way You taught at Emmaus: finding You. Amen." (Closing Prayer)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes." (Jeremiah 11:19, RSV2CE)

Every Passage in This Session

Jeremiah 37-38

Primary Text

- Jeremiah 37:11-17 · arrest, beating, dungeon; Zedekiah's secret question (Q1)
- Jeremiah 38:1-6 · the charge, the surrender, the cistern, the mire (Q2-Q3)
- Jeremiah 38:7-13 · Ebed-melech, ropes and rags (Q4)
- Jeremiah 39:15-18 · the Gentile's reward (Q4)

The Composite Portrait (Q5)

- Jeremiah 1:5 · known before birth (Session 1)
- Jeremiah 16:2 · commanded celibacy as sign
- Jeremiah 9:1 · weeping over the people
- Jeremiah 7; 26 · Temple sermon and trial (Session 3)
- Jeremiah 11:19, 21 · the gentle lamb; the hometown plot (memory verse)
- Jeremiah 20:10 · familiar friends watching (Session 5)
- Jeremiah 25:15 · the cup (Session 7)

New Testament Fulfillment

- Matthew 16:13-14 · THE RESOLUTION (live discovery, Q6)
- Luke 19:41; Luke 4:28-29; Matthew 21:13; 26:39, 61 · the parallels the crowds saw
- Luke 24:27; John 5:46; Matthew 12:39-40 · Christ's own typology (steelman Q7)
- Psalm 69:2, 21; John 2:17; Psalm 40:2 · the mire psalms (Q8, Q10)
- Isaiah 53:7-8 · beside Jeremiah 11:19 (Live It)

Catechism

- CCC 128-130 · typology and the unity of the Testaments
- CCC 129 · Augustine's rule
- CCC 601 · the suffering Servant foretold