

Ebed-Melech: Faith Beyond Borders

Key Verse:

Jer 38:8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

Jer 38:9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

Meaning of his name and background

The name **Ebed-Melech** means "**Servant of the King**" in Hebrew. In the context of biblical history, this title indicates a person of significant loyalty and service, possibly a court official or an officer in the palace. Ebed-Melech was a notable figure in Jerusalem during the days leading up to the destruction of Solomon's temple. His story is found in Jeremiah 38; he was an Ethiopian eunuch who served in the court of Judah.

Ebed-Melech's background is key to understanding his remarkable faith and courage. As a black man in Israel, he knew what it was to be regarded as an outsider—treated differently because of his ethnicity. But his story extends beyond ethnicity; it speaks of loyalty, faith, and the support of truth against opposition. His unwavering support for Jeremiah, despite the prophetic warning that Judah's political situation was doomed, reveals a man committed to righteousness and divine truth.

Key insights:

1. Ebed-Melech was a black man in Israel—Apathy not an excuse for weakness

Being a black man in Israel during biblical times meant Ebed-Melech faced social discrimination and alienation—he was likely marginalized because of his ethnicity. Yet, his presence in the king's court indicates that he was respected for his service and loyalty. What is remarkable is that, despite these barriers and experiences of alienation, he did not allow societal prejudice to silence his convictions.

In fact, the biblical record challenges us not to use our outsider status as an excuse for silence or inaction. The King James Version of *Song of Solomon 1:5* beautifully captures this spirit: *"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of*

Solomon.” This verse reminds us that our background, race, or outsider status does not diminish our worth or our capacity to serve God.

Ebed-Melech’s support of Jeremiah exemplifies this truth. When the prophet was cast into the dungeon, it was Ebed-Melech who risked his position and safety to intercede for Jeremiah and free him. His actions illustrate that faith and loyalty to truth should never be compromised by societal discrimination or the perception of being outsiders.

2. Salvation in believing the prophets

The tragic irony of Judah’s downfall is that the only man who openly believed Jeremiah’s prophetic message was an African. Supporting the prophet was a risky act—Jeremiah had become somewhat of an enemy of the political elite because he prophesied that Babylon would conquer Judah unless the people surrendered. In the final analysis, Ebed-Melech’s support to Jeremiah wasn’t just an act of compassion; it was an act of faith that directly saved his life. The Bible states: *“Therefore, thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my fury shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.”* (Jeremiah 32:29-30).

While Judah caved to fear and political pressure, Ebed-Melech’s act of faith and bravery restored Jeremiah’s life. His story reminds us that trusting in divine truth, even amidst peril, has eternal significance. Throughout Scripture, Africa’s role in faith history is profound. Consider the wife of Moses — “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.” (Numbers 12:1). Even more notably, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39, who received the Gospel and believed, citing Isaiah’s prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, exemplifies the power of faith from Africa. The Eunuch’s story showcases that divine salvation is inclusive of all nations and races, reinforcing that God’s kingdom is universal.

3. Believing Prophets and Apostles—Deliverance and Salvation

The story in Jeremiah 38:7-13 recounts how Ebed-Melech’s bold intervention saved him from the pit of despair. When Jerusalem was besieged and Jeremiah was thrown into the dungeon, Ebed-Melech, with a measure of faith, took action and shamed the king’s officials by daring

to advocate for the prophet's life. Jeremiah was cast into the muddy dungeon, destined to die—yet because of Ebed-Melech's intervention, the prophet was preserved. The Lord's response was clear:

***Jer 39:16** Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.*

***Jer 39:17** But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.*

***Jer 39:18** For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.*

This highlights a profound principle: believing the divine message and actively supporting the prophets or apostles deliver us from the wrath of God to come. Ebed-Melech's faith and action guaranteed his salvation in that dangerous moment, and his story echoes the bigger spiritual truth that trusting in God's word, obeying his servants, and standing for righteousness guarantees divine protection. In the New Testament, we see a parallel in the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:20 states: *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."* Just as Ebed-Melech's act of faith brought physical deliverance, believing in Jesus and trusting the biblical apostles' message bring eternal salvation. Jeremiah's words and the prophets' messages were a foreshadowing of the salvation we find in Jesus.

Furthermore, the prophet Isaiah lamented: *"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1).* This verse emphasizes that faith in God's messages, even when they seem improbable or are delivered by unlikely messengers, is the key to divine salvation. The fact that a man from Africa, Ebed-Melech, could believe Jeremiah's prophecy and act on it illustrates that salvation is accessible to all nations, tribes, and tongues.

Dissection of Deep Truths:

Ebed-Melech's story is not merely about a brave man risking his life—it's about divine justice, faith that crosses racial and national boundaries, and the universal call of salvation. His support for Jeremiah underscores that support for truth and righteousness often comes from unexpected places, and faith from the margins can influence the course of history. His act of support was a shadow of the larger divine plan—that salvation through Jesus Christ

would extend beyond the borders of Israel to all nations, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 49:6: *“It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.”*

The tragedy, however, is that the only man who believed Jeremiah’s prophetic message and acted in faith was an African—highlighting that faith and divine support are often found among outsiders. Africa has a proud Biblical faith heritage—evidenced by figures like the wife of Moses (*Exodus 2:21*), and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts as previously mentioned. These stories attest to significant nodes of divine faith that challenge stereotypes and underscore the universality of God's salvation plan.

Conclusion:

Ebed-Melech’s story teaches us that divine support and salvation are accessible to anyone, regardless of background, race, or social status. His brave act of faith in support of the prophet Jeremiah symbolizes a profound spiritual truth: supporting truth, righteousness, and divine revelation guarantees both physical and spiritual salvation. Just as Jeremiah’s words and Ebed-Melech’s act of faith saved his life, so too does believing in Jesus Christ—our chief cornerstone—save our souls. The story encourages us to be bold like Ebed-Melech, to support the truth, and to stand firm in our faith amidst opposition and alienation. Because when we believe and act on God's Word, His arm of salvation is revealed—delivering us from divine wrath and opening the pathway to eternal life. We must remember that salvation is a gift for all nations, as stated in Isaiah—believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation are part of God's chosen people.

Let the example of Ebed-Melech inspire us to stand out as believers, supporting righteousness even when it’s unpopular, trusting in the divine promises, and knowing that God’s salvation is for everyone who believes—regardless of race or background.