

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing
Part LXIX: A Lesson About Not Trusting Other People Prematurely
(Jeremiah 40:13-41:10)

I. Introduction

- A. As in the case of the survivors of Jerusalem's fall, people may so strongly desire peace and stability after a traumatic event that they prematurely trust even bad people. Yet, Paul called us not to lay hands suddenly on anyone to ordain them or to receive them back into the church after church discipline, 1 Timothy 5:22, 24-25.
- B. Such was the challenge faced by Babylon's puppet governor Gedaliah in Jeremiah 40:13-41:10, and we view the account of it given in this passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. A Lesson About Not Trusting Other People Prematurely, Jeremiah 40:13-41:10.

- A. Gedaliah, Babylon's puppet governor, mistakenly prematurely trusted a questionable party, Jeremiah 40:13-16:
 - 1. The leaders of the guerilla units that had returned from the open fields to Gedaliah after Jerusalem's fall approached Gedaliah at Mizpah to warn him that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, one of the parties that had come to Gedaliah, had actually been sent by the king of Ammon to assassinate him, Jeremiah 40:13-14.
 - 2. This concern by these guerilla unit leaders was certainly a reasonable one in view of Judah's recent past:
 - a. First, Judah and Ammon, vassals of Babylon, had participated in a secret meeting of nations before Jerusalem fell in 593 B. C. to assess a plan of unitedly rebelling against Babylon, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1187. Though that meeting had not itself produced any action, Egypt's Pharaoh then "persuaded Judah, Ammon, and Tyre to revolt against Babylon" (Ibid.), so Babylon had responded to this revolt by attacking and defeating Judah first while Ammon was still not yet captured by Babylon, Ibid. Thus, puppet governor Gedaliah's devotion to Babylon was unsettling to the Ammonites, and it was to the Ammonite king's advantage to kill Gedaliah and replace him with an anti-Babylonian ruler that would keep Judah destabilized and require Babylon to keep troops there instead of attacking Ammon, Ibid.
 - b. Second, the Ammonite king's possible use of Ishmael was another valid issue of concern: Ishmael was of Judah's royal line (Jer. 41:1), and may have sided with Judah's past rulers who opposed Babylon!
 - 3. Thus, one of the guerilla leaders, Johanan the son of Kareah, offered Gedaliah his services of secretly killing Ishmael the son of Nethaniah for the preservation of Gedaliah's administration, Jeremiah 40:15.
 - 4. However, having faced the trauma of war, and assuming that people coming to him were tired of conflict, Gedaliah refused Johanan's offer, claiming he spoke evil about Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Jer. 40:16.
- B. Nevertheless, Gedaliah's trust in Ishmael proved to be premature, wrong and thus lethal, Jeremiah 41:1-10:
 - 1. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah with a group of his supporters deceived Gedaliah, pretending to be at peace with him by eating with him only then to assassinate him and all the Jews eating with him along with a group of men who were arriving at Mizpah from Shechem to mourn the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah 41:1-7.
 - 2. Ten of the men in this group persuaded Ishamael not to kill them with the promise that they could show him where to find a trove of food they had hidden in a field somewhere, Jeremiah 41:8.
 - 3. However, the pit where Ishamael threw the dead bodies of the men he had slain was the pit that Judah's king Asa had made out of fear of Israel's king Baasha 200 years before this, Jeremiah 41:9; Ibid., p. 1188. Amazingly, the cistern that had been built to preserve life in Judah was now filled with their dead, Ibid.!
 - 4. Thus, Gedaliah's presumption that Johanan had viewed Ishmael too negatively had proved to be wrong where Johanan's view of Ishmael had proved to be right, at great cost for Gedaliah and his administration!
- C. Ishmael and his men also took captive the rest of the survivors at Mizpah, including Jeremiah, and headed toward the Ammonite kingdom, exposing his friendly ties with the Ammonites, Jeremiah 41:10.

Lesson: *For prematurely trusting other people, Gedaliah lost his governorship, created ongoing civil unrest for Judah's survivors and lost the lives of other innocent people including his own life.*

Application: *(1) May we "lay hands suddenly on no man" that we not "be partaker of other men's sins" as taught in 1 Timothy 5:22, 24-25. (2) If we receive a warning about another party like Gedaliah received from Johanan, may we proceed with CAUTION, realizing that EITHER the one REPORTING the bad news may be erring OR that he may be telling the TRUTH. We must take precaution and give TIME for the truth to be seen, 1 Timothy 5:24-25. (3) If we are in oversight positions, may we NOT let our EMOTIONS rule us, but keep our heads in all situations (2 Timothy 4:5 NIV), that we evaluate all people with objective caution, care and wisdom.*