

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH

XVI. Jeremiah's Thriving Amid Troubling Government Intrigue

(Jeremiah 40:7-41:15)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to prophesy in Judah during its apostasy until God's judgment fell on the nation.
- B. Jeremiah's ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our era of spiritual decline. Such a calling can be marked by political opposition that seeks to cause God's servants to cease being able to do His work.
- C. Jeremiah 40:7-41:15 reports on godly Jeremiah's thriving amid dangerous government intrigue, and it offers a lesson for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Jeremiah's Thriving Amid Troubling Government Intrigue, Jeremiah 40:7-41:15.

- A. Following his release from the prison court in Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, Babylon's captain of the guard, Jeremiah went to Mizpah a few miles north of the destroyed city of Jerusalem to live under Babylon's puppet governor Gedaliah, Jeremiah 40:6. Jeremiah did this at the recommendation of Nebuzaradan since God's will was for the people of Israel to submit to Babylonian rule (Jeremiah 29:4-7). Thus, following the suggestion of the Babylonian captain would have been understood by Jeremiah to be the will of God at this time in his life.
- B. For some weeks, life in this arrangement yielded a welcome order and peace after Jerusalem's dreadful fall:
 1. News of Gedaliah's appointment by Babylon as Judah's governor was welcomed by Hebrew guerillas in the field who had escaped capture by Babylon, and Hebrews who had fled to Moab, Ammon, and Edom when Babylon invaded joined the guerilla forces in returning to rally around Gedaliah, Jer. 40:7-8, 11.
 2. Gedaliah told the Hebrew guerilla forces that they should not fear the Babylonians, but rather to dwell with him under Babylon's rule, and to harvest the crops of the land, Jer. 40:8-10. Thus, they with the returning Hebrew refugees from Moab, Ammon and Edom gathered much wine and summer fruits, Jer. 40:12.
- C. However, this peaceful, orderly lifestyle was unfortunately cut short due to leadership intrigue and failure:
 1. Johanan the son of Kareah, leader of the guerilla forces, told Gedaliah that Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, of the Hebrew princes with connection to the Hebrew throne, was being sent by Ammon's king Baalis to kill Gedaliah likely to set Ishmael up as ruler in Israel due to Ishmael's claim to be of Israel's royal seed, Jeremiah 40:13-14. Gedaliah refused to believe Johanan's warning, and he refused an offer by Johanan to slay Ishmael as a preventative measure in securing his personal safety, Jeremiah 40:15-16.
 2. Nevertheless, Gedaliah should have heeded Johanan's sensible warning: Ishmael pretended to fellowship with Gedaliah, and Ishmael came with other men of the Hebrew royal line and slew Gedaliah and the Jews who were ruling with him, including the men of war who were guarding them. Ishmael then killed other Hebrews who were bringing food to offer at the temple and took the people who had come under Gedaliah's rule to go away, looking for food that he was told was hidden in the fields, Jeremiah 41:1-10.
 3. Significantly, the bodies of Gedaliah and his slain men were thrown into a cistern that had been dug by Judah's king Asa to protect life from invaders of the Kingdom of Israel. The cistern that had been designed to save life was now used to hold dead bodies, Jeremiah 41:9. (Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1188)
 4. The Hebrew guerilla forces had been absent from Mizpah during Gedaliah's assassination, so when they heard of the atrocity, they pursued Ishmael's men and their captives and caught up with them at Gibeon 4 miles from Mizpah, Jer. 41:11-12. (The MacM. Bib. At., 1968, Map 130) In the confusion that followed, the captives gladly turned to follow Johanan, and Ishmael escaped with eight men to Ammon, v. 13-15.
 5. Jeremiah had faced all this trauma: he had experienced the shock of Gedaliah's assassination, the capture by Ishmael's forces, the trek of four miles to Gibeon with all of its future uncertainties and the glad relief of being rescued by Johanan and his guerilla forces!

Lesson: *Though following God's will in submitting to Babylonian rule by heeding Nebuzaradan's suggestion that Jeremiah live under Gedaliah, Babylon's puppet governor, a move that initially proved to be orderly, peaceful and productive, Jeremiah STILL experienced trouble due to Gedaliah's failure to heed a sensible warning by Johanan about Ishmael's plans to assassinate him. Thus, Jeremiah faced trauma at Ishmael's attack, captivity, and trek to an unknown destination only to be glad to see Johanan and his guerilla forces deliver him and the other Hebrews.*

Application: *Heeding God's will generally produces orderly peace and productivity, but due to a lack of human wisdom or care among leaders, it can also involve significant trials for God's people. Nevertheless, we must trust God even in times of uncertainty and crisis caused by a failure in leaders, for GOD'S plan WILL be fulfilled!*