

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH

XVII. Jeremiah's Thriving Amid Dooming Unbelief In Judah's People (Jeremiah 41:16-43:13)

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 41:16-43:13 reports on godly Jeremiah's thriving amid dooming unbelief in Judah's people, and it offers a lesson for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Jeremiah's Thriving Amid Dooming Unbelief In Judah's People, Jeremiah 41:16-43:13.

- A. After Jerusalem's fall to Babylon, Jeremiah heeded God's will to submit to the advice of Babylon's captain of the guard that Jeremiah dwell at Mizpah under the rule of Babylon's puppet governor Gedaliah, Jer. 39:1-40:6.
- B. However, Gedaliah had failed to heed sensible advice from Judah's guerilla forces in being on guard against Ishmael of Judah's royal seed who might try to kill Gedaliah to take control of Judah's people, Jer. 40:7-16.
- C. Ishmael then indeed by deceit assassinated Gedaliah, and Johanan the son of Kareah and the other guerilla forces rescued Jeremiah and the people who had dwelt with Gedaliah from Ishmael's forces, Jer. 41:1-15.
- D. The guerilla forces believed that when Babylon's king heard of Gedaliah's assassination, he would blame them for Gedaliah's death and attack them, so they planned to flee into Egypt for asylum, Jeremiah 41:16-18.
- E. However, they thought it good to get the Lord's message through Jeremiah on their planned flight, for Jeremiah's prediction about Babylon's invasion had been proved to be true, validating him as a true messenger of the Lord. Thus, they asked Jeremiah for God's word about their plans, Jer. 42:1-4. They promised that God would be "a true and faithful witness" if they did not heed Jeremiah's message from the Lord, Jer. 42:5-6.
- F. Ten days later, the Lord gave Jeremiah the message that the people had requested (Jeremiah 42:7), so Jeremiah summoned the people and the guerilla forces and informed them that if they stayed in Judah, not fearing Babylon's king, God would deliver them from the king's hand and even have him show them mercy, Jer. 42:8-12. However, if they would not listen to the Lord's voice to stay in Judah, but flee into Egypt, the sword and famine that they feared from another Babylonian invasion would pursue them into Egypt, Jer. 42:13-18.
- G. God knew that the survivors in Judah wanted Jeremiah simply to approve of their plan, so the Lord informed them through Jeremiah that they had made a fatal mistake in agreeing to obey the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, Jer. 42:19-20. Since they had already decided to go into Egypt, God predicted through Jeremiah that they would die by the sword, famine, and disease down in Egypt, Jeremiah 42:21-22.
- H. After Jeremiah had given his message, all the proud leaders of the group told Jeremiah that he had given them a false message that was not from God, that Jeremiah's scribe Baruch had manipulated Jeremiah into giving a message that would cause them to be delivered into the hand of the Babylonians, Jeremiah 43:1-3.
- I. Thus, Johanan and the guerilla forces forcibly took all the people, including Jeremiah and Baruch, and went to Tahpanhes in northeastern Egypt, Jer. 43:4-7 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Jer. 43:7). Jeremiah was thus forced to go into Egypt against what he knew was God's will for him! In addition, God in Deuteronomy 17:16 and later in Isaiah 31:1 had warned all Israel not to return to Egypt for the nation's protection!
- J. The Lord knew that Jeremiah was innocent of this move, so He still ministered through Jeremiah, telling him publicly to take large stones and bury them under the tiled brick terrace in Tahpanhes, and "(s)uch a paved area has been found in front of the entrance to the royal wedding," Jeremiah 43:8-9; *Ibid.*, ftn. to Jer. 43:9.
- K. Jeremiah was then to prophesy before Judah's people in Tahpanhes that God would send Babylon's king to set his throne over the stones that Jeremiah had buried there, that Nebuchadnezzar would invade Egypt, destroy it, slay many people and take many of them captive while destroying Egypt's idolatrous structures, Jer. 43:10-13.

Lesson: *For not heeding God's proven prophet Jeremiah and Scripture, Judah's survivors fled in fear of Babylon to Egypt, forcibly taking Jeremiah with them. God thus said that Babylon whom they feared would invade Egypt.*

Application: *(1) May we heed God to trust Him for His protection and provision versus fleeing from trouble in our own plans and efforts. (2) Though it was God's will for the people of Judah and Jeremiah to stay in Judah, since Jeremiah was forcibly taken into Egypt, God did not hold him personally accountable for sin, but He continued to minister through Jeremiah. Thus, if we are part of a group that counters God's will opposite our personal choice, we can be sure that God does not hold us accountable for sin, but that He will still work with us and bless us!*