

THE FEW AND THE POOR

Jeremiah 40-44

Judah's headed for destruction

Even in the midst of the crisis,

God gives His wayward people a promise of restoration.

God isn't finished with His people.

ACCUSATION AND EXHORTATION 2-20

Eight Messages of Warning 2:1-19:13

Accusation of sin and idolatry => Call to repentance

Israel's "Stiff-Necked" Response to warnings 19:14-20:18

PREDICTION OF CAPTIVITY 21-39

Eight messages of judgment 21-29

Judgment is coming! "You can't play games with God!"

Future restoration 30-33 The GOOD News!

God hasn't abandoned nor forgotten His people.

He will fulfill His promise to them.

Before Israel can experience blessings, they must return to God.

TWO NOTABLE CONTRASTS 34-38

2 exceptions to pattern of unbelief and disobedience stand out.

They make guilt of the people even more notable.

1st contrast: unfaithful Israel and faithful Recabites 34-35

Unfaithful Israel: Broken Covenant 34

In spite of promise made to God re. slaves, their obedience doesn't last.

Therefore, destruction and captivity will come against them.

Faithful Recabites 35

They're allies of Israel—have no land of their own but wander in fields.

Jonadab, forefather, ally of Jehu and supporter of Yahweh, against Baal.

Jeremiah tempts Recabites to drink wine with him (1-5).

Recabites refuse and obey their father's command (6-11).

He praises them, and uses them as an example,

because they remain faithful to their father's teaching. (12-16)

These are not Israelites—they're not the people of God.

There's no evidence they follow Yahweh.

Israel should have taught them about submission to Yahweh.

Instead, *they* are the example for Israel.

Judah will experience God's judgment.

Recabites are promised preservation and participation in God's blessings

2nd contrast: Unfaithful Israel vs. the Faithful Servant 36-38

Unfaithful Israel 36-38:6

Scroll burned 36

Jeremiah prepares a scroll 1-10

To remind them of God's message. To bring them to repentance.

Scroll burned Lack of fear Command to arrest Jeremiah
Results 27-32

Judgment on king ... on Judah Preparation of new scroll

Warning against trusting Egypt 37:1-10

When Babylon comes against Jerusalem, people call Egypt for help.

God warns them; Babylon will come back to destroy them. 8, 10

Rejection of God's Messenger 37:11-38:6

Jeremiah's message is rejected; he's arrested unjustly. 11-16

Jeremiah thrown in cistern 38:1-6

Faithful servant 38:7-13

Care shown God's servant by Ethiopian servant.

He's not even part of God's people.

He's a *foreign* slave from a *pagan* country (7a).

He recognizes injustice; risks his life to save God's servant

Because of care for God's servant, he's promised protection (39:15-18a).

The significance 39:18b

He stands as example to God's people, because he, a pagan, trusts Yahweh when

God's own people reject Him (18b).

After 2 contrasts, Jeremiah delivers final warning to submit to Babylon.

Zedekiah again asks what he should do. 38:14ff

Answer hasn't changed: If he submits to Babylon, God will bless him.

Zedekiah's fear wins out; he experiences judgment God predicted.

FULFILLED JUDGMENT 39

Judgment comes as Jeremiah foretold 1-10

Jeremiah's submission to Babylon is rewarded 11-14

Blessing for Ebed-Melech because of trust in God, kindness to

Jeremiah 15-18

Our lesson this week presents many decisions that had to be made.

We all make decisions everyday.

What factors influence our decisions?

Friends, world, enemies, Holy Spirit, dreams and visions, our desires, Bible.

Which voices should we reject outright? Which can we always trust?

Which can be trusted sometimes, but not always?

How can we determine when to follow them?

MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM with those who remain 40-45

Following defeat of Jerusalem, a few remain in the land.

Who are they? **39:8-10** *"The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people. ¹⁰ Nebuzaradan commander of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people, who owned nothing; and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields."*

The group left is the poorest segment of poor left behind previously. Jeremiah's ministry continues among them.

Release of Jeremiah 40:1-6

Nebuzaradan, recognizes the reason for their victory over Israel.

What reason does he give? **40:2-3** *"When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah, he said to him, 'The Lord your God decreed this disaster for this place. ³ And now the Lord has brought it about; he has done just as he said he would. All this happened because you people sinned against the Lord and did not obey him.'"*

God delivered His people into their hands on account of their rebellion.

Jeremiah's role is recognized. He may choose where he prefers to live. **4-6**

"Today I am freeing you from the chains on your wrists. Come with me to Babylon, if you like, and I will look after you; but if you don't want to, then don't come. Look, the whole country lies before you; go wherever you please."⁵ However, before Jeremiah turned to go, Nebuzaradan added, "Go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah, and live with him among the people, or go anywhere else you please." Then the commander gave him provisions and a present and let him go. ⁶ So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people who were left behind.

Jeremiah chooses to stay behind, where he's needed.

Government of Gedaliah 40:7-41:18

Gedaliah is named governor. He's placed there by God.

Who is this Gedaliah?

Grandfather, is Shaphan, secretary who told Josiah about the book of the law

2 Ki. 22:8, 10 *"Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord' He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. ... 10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, 'Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.' And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ... the king gave these orders ... 13 'Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."*

Gedaliah's father, Ahikam, protects Jeremiah after sermon in temple (26:24).

Gedaliah's of Jewish origin, yet named governor by Nebuchadnezzar.

What does that tell us about him?

He must have believed Jeremiah and submitted to Babylon (7-9).

9 *Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid to serve the Babylonians," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you.*

Gedaliah comes from a God-fearing family and follows the Lord.

God apparently rewards him for faith and obedience (10-12).

Gedaliah's failure **13-16** *"Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers still in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah ¹⁴and said to him, "Don't you know that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take your life?" But Gedaliah ... didn't believe them. ¹⁵Then Johanan son of Kareah said privately to Gedaliah in Mizpah, "Let me go kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life and cause all the Jews gathered around you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?" ¹⁶But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, "Don't do such a thing! What you are saying about Ishmael is not true."*

What did Gedaliah do? What should he have done?

Cp. Josh. 9—the Gibeonite deception—v. 14 *"they did not inquire of the Lord."*

Although Gedaliah fears God and submits to His authority, there's one major failure in his rule (13-16).

Rather than seek God's will, he does what he wants to do.

Results: **41:1-3** *"In the 7th month Ishmael ...who was of royal blood and had been one of the king's officers, came with 10 men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. While they were eating there, ²Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the 10 men with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam ... with the sword, killing the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land. ³Ishmael also killed all the Jews who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Babylonian soldiers who were there."*

What important lesson does Gedaliah's failure teach us?

Lessons for us:

Gedaliah is a follower of God. He obeys God's voice and submits to Babylon.

He begins well, teaching people to submit to Babylon as God said.

Yet, at critical point, he does what *he* wants, instead of asking God what to do.

He and all the people suffer because he fails to seek God's will first.

What about us?

Escape to Egypt 42-43:7

People come to Jeremiah 42:1-6

They begin the captivity well.

Majority don't support Ishmael.

When they're afraid of what Babylonia will do, they seek Jeremiah's advice.

Notice request: **1-3** *"All the army officers, including Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest approached ²Jeremiah the prophet and said to him, "Please hear our petition and pray to the Lord your God for this entire remnant. For as you now see, though we were once many, now only a few are left. ³Pray that the Lord your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do."*

What catches your attention about their request?

What do you observe about their attitude toward God? [Notice pronouns]

What does Jeremiah's answer indicate about this attitude?

4 [Pronouns]

"I have heard you," replied Jeremiah the prophet. "I will certainly pray to the Lord your God as you have requested; I will tell you everything the Lord says and will keep nothing back from you."

What is the people's attitude toward God and His Word? **5-6**
*"Then they said to Jeremiah, 'May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the Lord your God sends you to tell us.'⁶ Whether it's favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the Lord **our** God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the Lord **our** God."*

They ask Jeremiah to find out what God wants them to do

God answers 7-22

After 10 day wait, God responds; because of fear, they already made up minds.

Stay in land => live; Escape to Egypt => die

The people respond 43:1-7

How do they respond to the message? What do they do?

God tells them stay; they leave anyway; take Jeremiah by force.

Notice the role of Johanan. Who is he?

40:7-12 Leader under Gedaliah

40:13-16 Warns Gedaliah about plot to kill him.

41:11-18 Rescues captives from Ishmael

42:1-10 Leads people in request and confession before Jeremiah.

43:1-7 Now what happens? *"When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the Lord their God—everything the Lord had sent him to tell them—²Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, 'You're lying! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, 'You must not go to Egypt to settle there.'³ Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us to hand us over to the Babylonians, so they may kill us or carry us into exile to Babylon.'⁴ So Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers and all the people disobeyed the Lord's command to stay in the land of Judah.⁵ Instead, Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers led away all the remnant of Judah who had come back to live in the land of Judah from all the nations where they'd been scattered. ⁶They led away all the men, women and children and the king's daughters whom Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard left with Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah.⁷ So they entered Egypt in disobedience to the Lord and went as far as Tahpanhes.*

Why does Johanan change now?

How does his attitude affect the people?

What would have happened to them if Johanan had remained faithful?

Judgment in Egypt 43:8-44:30

God's judgment reaches them in Egypt.

They thought they'd be safe. Babylonia wouldn't attack Egypt to get them!

What happens to them in Egypt?

44:8 *"Why provoke me to anger with what your hands have made, burning incense to other gods in Egypt, where you have come to live? You will destroy yourselves and make yourselves an object of cursing and reproach among all the nations on earth."* **Idolatry**

44:10 *"To this day they have not humbled themselves or shown reverence, nor have they followed my law and the decrees I set before you and your fathers."*

Disobedience

What will be the final result? **12, 14** *"I will take away the remnant of Judah who were determined to go to Egypt to settle there. They will all perish in Egypt; they will fall by the sword or die from famine. From the least to the greatest, they will die by sword or famine.... 14 None of the remnant of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt will escape or survive to return to the land of Judah, to which they long to return and live; none will return except a few fugitives."*

How do the people respond to this message?

16 *"We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord!"*

Jeremiah predicts their destruction there (43:8-44:14).

Instead of repenting, people become stubborn and rebel (15-19).

They even blame the fall of Jerusalem

on the fact that they stopped worshiping the queen of heaven.

With this claim, Jeremiah loses his patience.

He reminds them: idolatry was cause of previous judgment (20-23).

God will again judge them and destroy them there (24-30).

APPLICATION—What do we learn from ...

We've seen some important decisions that Israel and her leaders had to make.

We've also seen the results of those decisions.

What principles can we learn that apply to decisions WE have to make?

What decisions might we face this week?

How will WE make OUR decision?

Review these principles; be sure you apply them.

Then you can be sure you're moving the way God wants.

What lessons should we learn concerning God's plan in the 21st Century?

What should WE do in the light of these messages?

What does this passage tell us about God's plan for *OUR* life?