

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

KAPONO: Heavenly Father, thank You so much. You are worthy to be praised, and the only one, the only thing worthy of praise, Lord. Thank You for this time that we can gather and just worship You and lift up Your name. Be with the message, Lord. And I pray that You will just open up our hearts to receive it. Thank You again for this place and time. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus.

PASTOR JD: Amen and Amen. Wow! Rowdy bunch tonight.

[Applause]

All right, well, good evening and welcome! So glad you're here. So glad that you're joining with us as well online. Before we jump in, though, I just want to mention a lot of you have been asking about Christmas, which, as you know, falls on Sunday this year. So we made the decision to have a Christmas Eve Service instead of Sunday Morning Services.

So 5:00 p.m. — oh, good, thank you. See?

[Applause]

I was going to say if anybody has any complaints, they can email another church about it, I guess; I don't know. (Chuckling)

So no, we just made the decision: Christmas morning everybody wants to be with their families. However, Saturday night, 5:00; we're going to start at 5:00. We're going to have our Christmas Eve Service. So you might want to make a note of that. And then Sunday, New Year's Day, we do have our two services. Actually, Pastor Mac is going to be teaching on January 1st, Sunday morning.

So okay, let's get started. Three more chapters, right? Okay, full disclosure, last week I told you three more chapters, and we did three chapters last week with communion. And you didn't get home that late, did you?

Of course, I was watching the cameras to see how many of you brought your pajamas and toothbrushes for tonight. You're not going to need them. So let's pray, yeah? Looking forward to what God has for us tonight.

Father in Heaven, thank You so much, Lord. Lord, we need You to now just kind of settle us down, quiet our minds, especially now this time of year is always so busy and even stressful, needlessly unfortunately, but it is.

And so, Lord, just quiet our minds so we can give You our undivided attention tonight and Lord, just settle our hearts because we really want this to be our time together and not just with each other in fellowship and worship but with You in Your Word. So Lord, we're really looking forward to what it is that You have for us in these three chapters that we have before us tonight.

And we're with great anticipation, looking to You, the author, the finisher of our faith to minister to us and speak into our lives. Lord, thank You so much for this time. We love You so much in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

All right, so again, I made the decision to do three chapters because all three of them, of course, they go together, but they also speak to how it is that while God directs our steps, so too does He also direct our stops. And all three chapters that are before us tonight are really a much-needed reminder of how we, as God's people, respond to God's will, not just for our lives, but the direction in our lives.

Jeremiah 42-44

God Directs Our Steps and Stops

J.D. Farag

Now, what we're about to see, and those of you that read ahead to stay ahead kind of already have an idea, very interesting, but what we're going to see is the people of Judah who are now seeking God's direction concerning their running to and hiding in Egypt. This after the murder of Gedaliah who was the governor installed by the king of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar.

And this guy by the name of Ishmael, who we were introduced to last week, murders him in the most unthinkable way in his home, at his table as their breaking bread, which in that culture would have been just, again, unthinkable. But he murders him, and now all of Judah is in fear of what is the king of Babylon going to do? Now, you may want to, before we jump in, just take a quick glance at the end of *Chapter 41*, because it's going to be germane to our understanding of what we're going to see tonight. They've already made their way to Egypt. They're in this town, close in proximity to Bethlehem on their way to Egypt. So they're already deciding to flee, to run for their lives, thinking that they're going to be safer in Egypt from Babylon.

And now God, through the prophet Jeremiah, is going to do everything and stop at nothing to stop them from going to Egypt. And spoiler alert, again, for those that read ahead to stay ahead, they do not listen.

How many times has God, in His willingness to always direct our steps, direct our paths, oftentimes deemed it necessary to give us a red light so that we don't go ahead? You know, God is always directing us. That's not the question. God is always answering our prayers. That's not the question.

The question is: Do we want to hear the answer to the prayer that we prayed? They're not going to — they want nothing to do with this. They're having nothing to do with this. They don't want to hear, as we're going to see here in a moment, they don't want to hear the answer. They've already made up their minds, so they're already on their way.

So they're going to go to Egypt, but God is going to try to stop them. God's going to either give us — answer our prayers in one of three ways. He's either going to give us a red light, stop; a yellow light, slow down with and proceed with caution and be prepared to stop. Of course, that's not what yellow lights mean for us, right?

[Laughter]

Come on, let's be honest. Yellow lights mean: Hurry up, speed up, get through the intersection before the thing goes to red. But yellow means slow down and proceed with caution and prepare to stop. Okay, don't speed up. We do that, right?

But then sometimes God will just give you the green light, and it's go, go for it, go ahead. So He directs our steps, but He also directs our stops. I like this quip; it's something that stayed with me over the years, has been very helpful to me over the years. It goes like this.

So when you pray and you ask God, and you seek God for direction, as we're going to see Judah do here, sometimes God will say, "Not yet. The timing is not right. Slow." Sometimes God's response will be, "You're not right. Grow." Sometimes the response is, "The request is not right. No." But sometimes God will say, "The timing is right, you're right, and the request is right. Go." Well, this is not one of those cases.

[Laughter]

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

How's that for an introduction? I'm trying here. I'm doing the best I can, just be gracious to me. You are.

All right, so with that, let's jump in. You ready?

Verse 1, Chapter 42, "Now all the captains of the forces, Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people..." [Again, on these pronunciations, this is the best I've got, so you can take it or leave it] "And all the people from the least to the greatest came near and [Verse 2] said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Please, let our petition be acceptable to you, and pray for us to the Lord your God, [Oh, He's not your God?] [That's interesting.] for all this remnant (since [We're told parenthetically] we are left but a few of many, as you can see) that [Verse 3] the Lord your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do."

In other words, they're coming to Jeremiah now saying, Jeremiah, would you seek the Lord on our behalf concerning this decision to flee to Egypt out of fear of the king of Babylon?

Then [Verse 4] Jeremiah the prophet said to them, **"I have heard. Indeed, I will pray to the Lord your God..."** [Interesting]

Whose God is it? It's our God. Your God. No, He's not my God; He's your God! Okay!

"Your God according to your words, and it shall be [Now listen very carefully to this] that whatever the Lord answers you, I will declare it to you. I will keep nothing back from you."

In other words, Jeremiah's saying, okay, I'll pray, but I'm not going to shrink back or hold back. Because I don't think you're going to like the answer that I'm going to get when I seek the Lord concerning your decision because what Jeremiah knows and discerns correctly and rightly is that this decision is birthed out of fear, the fear of man.

And whenever you and I make a decision that has at its core fear and not faith, you can be rest assured, it's not the Lord, because God does not work in that way. God has not given us a spirit of fear.

This decision — this is a life and death decision. They're running for their lives. They are so afraid now of the king of Babylon because this Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar's man, has been murdered. So now they're fearful that he's going to come back. He just left, and he's going to come back and that's it, man. He's just going to destroy everyone and destroy this city. So this is all out of fear.

But Jeremiah's response is telling for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that he's discerning that they're disingenuous and even dishonest. Let me explain, and don't be too hard on them because we do this all the time, and you're going to know what I'm talking about here in a moment. They've already made plans. Now they just want God to ratify it.

Come on. They've already made up their minds. They've already made their decision. Now they want to have Jeremiah take it to prayer and see if they can get God to bless it and put His stamp of approval on it. We do that.

Okay, fine. I'll just speak for myself. I still do that. Oh, God bless this.

No, I'm not. Oh, apparently you've already got this thing planned out, figured out, now you want Me to bless it? Maybe you should have come to Me first, and just said, Lord, what should I do? Well,

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

apparently you've already taken matters into your own hands, and now you just want me to bless your plans. I'm not going to bless them.

In fact, I'm going to say no. I'm going to try to stop you from doing what you're already planning to do and that which you asked Jeremiah to ask for My approval so you can. You're not going to get My approval. I'm going to say no. And I'm not being mean. I'm saying no for your own protection, because, see, I know the end from the beginning. You may think this is the right thing to do, but it's not. I'm trying to protect you from yourself.

You know that expression? You've heard it. You probably said it. You're your own worst enemy. Because it's true. Sometimes when you're looking at yourself in the mirror, which is not something I like doing much these days, but when I do, I know I am looking eyeball to eyeball at that enemy. And sometimes I just need to say to that guy, "No, no! "

Is that too much?

[Laughter]

He's trying to protect them from themselves, trying to protect them from the folly and the peril that will always ensue when a decision like this is made out of fear.

Verse 5, "So they said to Jeremiah, [Oh, this is just so...]" **“Let the Lord be a true and faithful witness between us if we do not do according to everything which the Lord your God sends us by you. Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God [Oh!] to whom we send you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.”**

Really? Give me a break. I mean, this is — they have — well, I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll just let Jeremiah, by the Holy Spirit, explain what happens.

Now, *verse 7*, and we need to talk about this and work through this. **"And it happened after ten days that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah."**

Wait, ten days? Okay, so Jeremiah agrees. They come to him, say, Jeremiah, please, would you petition the throne on our behalf concerning this decision? And Jeremiah was like, Yeah, sure, I'll pray. I'll do that. And I will tell you everything the Lord says in response, and I'm not going to hold back, and you're probably not going to like it.

And then they come back with, No, no matter what it is, we will obey the voice of God, whether it's pleasing or displeasing. We just want to make sure this is God's will.

So Jeremiah is like, Okay. So what does he do? He goes and he prays. And *verse 7*, we're told, very interesting detail, by the way, 10 days. That's a particular interest given that Jeremiah is patiently waiting on the Lord in his seeking of the Lord.

Now here's what I'm thinking. Jeremiah already knows what's going on here. He's not stupid. He already knows what's going on. And I would even venture to say that he already knows what God's response is going to be.

What? Why do I say that?

Because everything heretofore has been go surrender, go to Babylon, and you'll live. You try to fight this; you're going to die. And there were those who were remaining in Judah, in Jerusalem, and God

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

assured them through the prophet Jeremiah that they would be taken care of and no harm would befall them.

Now that's important because it would seem that they did not really believe that. They thought they were safer in Egypt than they would be if they remained there in Judah. Now, ten days, very long time. And then you have to understand that the situation is such that this is of life and death urgency.

I would imagine — I wonder — it's not in the text, but if I was there, I would be texting Jeremiah every day. Did you hear back yet? Did you get a response? Because we need to get to Egypt, and so, did you?

Nope, not yet, not yet.

And yet, you're waiting for those three dots on the text message. You know what I'm talking about? Because, you know, because he's responding to the text.

No, nothing yet. Still praying.

Okay, then tomorrow you go and you text him again: Jeremiah, anything?

Nope. Ten days. It takes ten days.

Well, patient, persistent prayer: Do you think Jeremiah just prayed, said, okay, there, I did it. I just prayed one time. No, he's still seeking the Lord. He's still seeking the Lord because that's who Jeremiah is. Ten days!

Verse 8, "Then he called Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, and said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before Him: 'If [Key word, Verse 10] you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up. For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; do not be afraid of him,' says the Lord."

Does that sound a little bit redundant? Don't be afraid of the guy that you're afraid of. Do not be afraid of him, the guy that you're afraid of. I'm trying to make a point here. I'm not doing very well. But why is it recorded and written that way?

Here's what I think. Again, they're crippled and paralyzed by their fear. And God is basically putting His finger on their fear and saying, you have nothing to be afraid of. I know you fear the king of Babylon. You fear the repercussion, the retaliation now that Gedaliah's been murdered. But do not be afraid of him.

Why shouldn't I be afraid of him?

The Lord says, **'For I am with you, to save you and deliver you from his hand. And I will show you mercy, that he [Speaking of the king of Babylon by the way] may have mercy on you and cause you to return to your own land.'**

You would think there would be a collective sigh of relief. They're like, Oh, Jeremiah, thank you so much! Praise the Lord! Hey, let's go back. We're not going to Egypt. It's a red light. He stopped us

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

dead in our tracks. Let's go back to Judah. We have the promise of God, the assurance of God that we're going to be okay, we have nothing to be afraid of. This king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is an instrument in the hands of Almighty God, and he cannot do anything to us. And God said He will not let him do anything to us. It's safe, you guys, we can go back home now. And that would be the end of the chapter and probably the end of the Bible study early, but it's not.

[Laughter]

Yeah, because, you guys — man, you've been sitting under my teaching way too long.

[Laughter]

Verse 13, "But if you say, 'We will not dwell in this land,' disobeying the voice of the Lord your God, saying, 'No, but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for bread, and there we will dwell' — Then hear now the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah!

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, then [Verse 16] it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die.'

Listen, right about now, just — you'll forgive the pause, but this gives me pause because I just got done hearing Jeremiah say, Hey, the Lord responded, here's His answer. Stay in Judah. Don't go to Egypt. Stop. Don't go. Whatever you do, don't go to Egypt. If you stay in Judah, God is going to take care of you. He's going to protect you. You'll have nothing to be afraid of. If you go to Egypt, you're going to die.

Okay, I guess I'm not going to Egypt then.

[Laughter]

Verse 17: Are we okay so far? Are you with me on this? Do you feel me on this?

"So [Verse 17] shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to dwell there. They shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. And none of them shall remain or escape from the disaster that I will bring upon them.'

You still want to go to Egypt?

Not now.

Verse 18, "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'As My anger and My fury have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you [And this is interesting, I underlined it] when you enter Egypt.'

Ah! Oh, this is an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who already knows. Notice He doesn't say, "If you enter." He says, "No, when." When you do what you already decided to do.

"...when you enter Egypt. And you shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.' [Speaking of Judah] "The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, 'Do not go to Egypt!' "

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

That's pretty clear. Is that clear? I guess it's a "no," it's not a "maybe," it's not a "wait," it's not a "slow down, proceed with caution and be..."

No, it's NO! NO! Do not go!

By the way, I'm just saying: Your forefathers by the grace of God and the mercy of God got out of Egypt. And you want to go back? What is the matter with you? What is your problem? What are you thinking?

Okay, I feel better. Not really, but... **"Know certainly that I have admonished you this day."** Now this is what the Lord is saying to them in response to them through Jeremiah. Now it's Jeremiah's turn.

Watch this, *verse 20*. **"For you were hypocrites..."**

Now, listen, I was thinking about this, inquiring the Lord about this. I even kind of went back into my archive notes on this. There's not really that many times when Jeremiah is pronounced in his disdain towards the people of Judah. I mean, he loves them, he cares about them, he's grieving for them, weeping because of them.

There's a couple of times, and this is one of them, where he's like, you know, you guys lied to me. **"You were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord your God [Not that Jeremiah had that tone; I would have] according to all that the Lord your God says, [He's repeating what they told him] so declare to us and we will do it.' [Okay, that was actually not too bad, verse 21] And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, or anything which He has sent you by me.**

Now therefore, [Verse 22] know certainly [Certainly, you can be assured of this with a certainty] that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to dwell." [Egypt]

What a sobering end to the chapter. Now we're going to get into some of the "why" behind the "what" of their insistence, desire to go to Egypt.

Chapter 43:1, **"Now it happened, when Jeremiah had stopped speaking to all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, all these words, that [Verse 2] Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan the son of Kareah, [And I want you to watch this and listen very carefully] and all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, "You speak falsely! [You're a false prophet] The Lord our God has not sent you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.'**

Okay, I just — one more time — I'm Jeremiah right now, I'm like, God, a couple lightning bolts right about now would be really, really cool.

Now, let me try to sanctify what I just said. This is 40 years of this. 40 years of this! And this is how you're going to — you're... — wait a minute. Excuse me? You just falsely accuse me of being a false prophet.

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

Hey, let's go back over all of the prophecies over the 40 years. Find me one, I dare you, find me one that didn't come to pass exactly as I said by the grace of God through the Word of God that it would happen, one, one! I'm not angry; I know I sound like I am, maybe I am.

[Laughter]

And not only that, you can't find one, and every single one was 100%, not 99.9999999999%, no, 100% exactly, precisely. Excuse me. You guys, come here. Sit down, boy! Let's just talk about one of them.

I prophesied in the name of the Lord, thus saith the Lord that the Babylonians would come and take you captive into Babylon. Did it happen?

Well, yeah, but... And now I'm prophesying to you the word of the Lord, thus says the Lord, **"Do not go to Egypt."**

Do you think possibly that you should not go to Egypt? Let's talk about these proud men. It's textbook, isn't it? They're so arrogant and full of themselves and proud. And that's the fuel in the tank of the false accusation. And when I say "textbook," what I mean by "textbook" is the arrogance of you don't like the message, so you attack the messenger.

And you know, I'll — let me — I'll wait till we get there. I'm just feeling for Jeremiah. I really feel for him.

Now, *verse 3*, **"But, Baruch..."** [*Now you remember this guy?*]

This is Jeremiah's scribe, Jeremiah's friend. By the way, I think, Lord willing, next week, beginning in *Chapter 45*. it's all about this Baruch, who is also afraid now of what's going to happen to him on the heels of all that's happening right now, and I mean, God's like, you have nothing to be afraid of, Baruch.

Jeremiah's sent to him: I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to honor you. You've been faithful. So here now they're going to start blaming Baruch, who's guilty by association because he's Jeremiah's scribe. Now, look what they say here in their accusation, false accusation of Baruch. They're accusing him.

"Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may put us to death or carry us away captive to Babylon."

This is a conspiracy; this is a plot, an evil plot. It's a trap.

"So [*Verse 4*] Johanan the son of Kareah, all the captains of the forces, and all the people would not obey the voice of the Lord, to remain in the land of Judah. But Johanan [*Verse 5*] the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to dwell in the land of Judah, from all nations where they had been driven — men, women, children, the king's daughters, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and [*Get this*] Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah."

You know what's happening here? They're corralling all of them, including Baruch and Jeremiah, and they're taking them by force to Egypt.

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

So [Verse 7] they went to the land of, [Why?] for they did not obey the voice of the Lord. And they went as far as Tahpanhes. Then [Verse 8] the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, "Take large stones in your hand, and hide them in the sight of the men of Judah, in the clay in the brick courtyard which is at the entrance to Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes; and [Verse 10] say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant..." [Wait, what?]

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon is God's servant? Yeah, he's serving God's purpose as the instrument of judgment in the hand of God against His own people. I'm going to email Nebuchadnezzar. (Chuckling)

Sorry, just trying to be relative — relevant — I don't even get the word right. But he's going to bring him now this His servant.

"And will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden. And he will spread his royal pavilion over them."

Where? In Egypt. Wait a minute. They fled to Egypt to get away from him. I know, that's why I told you not to go. I'm going to send Nebuchadnezzar to Egypt now.

You are?

Yeah.

Okay, are you okay still? I know this is crazy, right? Well, this explains why it is that God allowed Jeremiah to be taken to Egypt against his will. It was certainly God's will. Why? Because he would need to now continue prophesying with yet another visual prophecy, this time with rocks. Remember, one time it was the belt, and then the oil, and now the rocks? And it's a visual prophecy.

And then he prophesies saying, You see these rocks right here? You see where I placed them?

Yeah, right at the entrance of the Pharaoh's place, man! Yeah. Why are you doing that, Jeremiah?

Thus says the Lord: Nebuchadnezzar, whom you feared and fled from, is coming, and he's going to set up his royal pavilion over these very rocks. So have a nice evening.

[Laughter]

That was mean, wasn't it? Oh, well.

Verse 11, "When he comes, he shall strike the land of Egypt and deliver to death those appointed for death, and to captivity those appointed for captivity, and to the sword those appointed for the sword. I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his garment, [This is imagery] and he shall go out from there in peace.

He [Verse 13] shall also break the sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh that are in the land of Egypt, and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians [In whom you are taking refuge] he shall burn with fire."

That's why I told you not to go. Do not go to Egypt. And you disobeyed and you went, and now here's what's going to happen. The very thing that you feared would happen if you stayed in Judah is going to happen even worse more so in Egypt. Horrifying prophecy. Here's the thing before we go to

Jeremiah 42-44

God Directs Our Steps and Stops

J.D. Farag

Chapter 44: Every single one of these things in explicit, graphic detail came to pass exactly as we're told it would here in the Book of Jeremiah. And historians; we're talking about sources other than the word of God record the year in history that exactly what God said would happen happened exactly as God said it would happen. That was redundant too, but oh, well.

Chapter 44:1, **"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them because of their wickedness [Verse 3]which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense and to serve other gods whom they did not know, they, nor you, nor your fathers.**

However [Verse 4] I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate! " But [Verse 5] they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods.

So [Verse 6] My fury and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day. "Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that [Verse 8] you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?" [Why? Why? Why? Why?]

Have you forgotten [Verse 9] the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives..."

Why is that there twice? I don't know.

[Laughter]

Let me ponder that for a moment. Hmm. The wickedness of their wives? Oh, I see. Wow! Hmm. Well, yeah, redundant redundancy, I guess, again, **"which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?"**

Notice the question mark.

Why?

Answer: Verse 10, "They have not been humbled, to this day, nor have they feared; they have not walked in My law or in My statutes that I set before you and your fathers.' "Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will set My face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah.

And [Verse 12] I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to dwell there, and they shall all be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine. They shall die, from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by famine, and they shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse and a reproach!

Jeremiah 42-44

God Directs Our Steps and Stops

J.D. Farag

For I will punish those [Verse 13] who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, [By the way, that's almost verbatim the prophecy in the Book of Revelation concerning the 7-year tribulation]

so that [Verse 14] none of the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt to dwell there shall escape or survive, lest they return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return and dwell. For none shall return except those who escape.”

We're going to see that more in a moment. But we need to talk about this too and work through this and not read past this. Ironic, isn't it? The irony of ironies in the sense that those in Egypt tried to save their lives and would lose it, whereas those in Babylon lost their lives and would end up saving it. Does that sound familiar?

Let's answer the "why" question.

What "why" question?

Okay. Why, I mean, God is — well, of course, it's rhetorical. He already knows the answer. But why would they, after all of this, still go to Egypt when God tried to stop them? Why would they still go?

Why would they disobey, not listen to Jeremiah and still go to Egypt after Jeremiah just got done telling them: Thus says the Lord, if you remain in Judah, you will have nothing to fear. Answer: They didn't believe. They didn't believe. That's the only answer that even comes anywhere close to explaining.

In fact, they didn't believe that God would stay true to His Word. Unbelief. And in the place of the unbelief, and we're going to talk about this more in a moment, in the place of their unbelief, they put their trust in the arm of flesh, and is not Egypt in scripture a type of the world? They're putting their trust in the — they actually believe that they're safer in the Egypt of this world than they are in the hand of Almighty God in the land of Almighty God.

Now, one more thing on this, and I just want to have this in place as we move forward. This is not in any way to excuse it, but it does in some way explain it. The logic, the circumstances are such that staying in Judah would have made absolutely no sense at all.

So why is God telling us to stay in Judah? The most logical thing that we could do, the best thing we could do right now is go to Egypt because it's safe in Egypt. There's no problems in Egypt. There's no starvation, there's no famine, there's no war. They said as much.

So on its face, this was a no-brainer in the realm of the logic, in the realm of the natural. And so they based this disastrous, deadly decision on the logic of it. It just made sense. And what God was saying absolutely made no sense.

Here's where I'm going with this. Oh, we do err greatly when we make decisions in our Christian lives based on what makes the most sense. And, you know, sometimes by way of illustration and for lack of a better one, we, you know, they have these they're very secular, you know, the two columns, pros and cons? You know, the pros outweigh the cons.

So you go down the list: Okay, if I do this, these are the negatives. If I do this, these are the positives. So you get down to the end of the list, and if the positives outweigh the negatives, the pros outweigh the cons, okay, then I'm going to go and make this decision based on that.

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

Well, God's saying, okay, you can do that all you want. The pros on the Egypt side of the column; you're going to need several pages. The pros for staying in Judah; you don't need any paper, actually, because the only pro is you're being obedient to Me.

I know it doesn't make any sense. It doesn't reconcile. It's not logical. But since when do we make decisions based on the logical? See, that's called sight, walking by sight, and sight is the antithesis of faith.

They're making this decision based on what they're seeing and what they just saw in Judah and what they're seeing in Egypt. Hey, this is a no-brainer, man. We're going to Egypt. That was a fatal mistake, and it would cost them their lives.

So again, the takeaway, I think, from this before we move on is this: Be very, very careful when your decision is based on what makes the most sense, because oftentimes it's God's will that you make this decision that absolutely makes no sense at all, no sense at all. It's called faith. It's called faith.

And see, they did not believe by faith in God. They actually didn't trust Him, which is why they took matters into their own hands. They did not trust God to have their best interests at heart. They did not believe God. And so they went to the arm of flesh, and it cost them their lives.

Verse 15, "Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you!""

Oh, Jeremiah! How do you think he felt right about now? They forced him into Egypt. He's not there because he wants to. He's there because they took him there. And then here comes more verbal abuse, more false accusations, more spitting in his face.

"All you've spoken..." Isn't this interesting? **"All you've spoke in the name of the Lord..."**

Oh, so you admit it was the name of the Lord that Jeremiah spoke? Well, yeah, it doesn't matter. We're not going to listen anyway. We're not going to listen to you. I know I'm painting myself into Jeremiah's account here, but I got to believe that Jeremiah's heart just sunk. You're not going to listen to me after all that you saw God do? And all of the prophecies from the Lord that I've given you, and you're not going to listen?

I think his heart just broke for them because they have no idea what they just did. They just signed their own death sentence. They basically to their own peril in refusing to listen to the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah. They've just signed their own death sentence.

"But [Verse 17, now this even gets worse] we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth to burn incense to the queen of heaven."

Stop right there. What? Have you heard that phrase before? Okay, the queen of heaven... was the goddess Ishtar. Now I'm going to ruin Resurrection Sunday for you. Ishtar is the Hebrew, Astarte is Greek: It's where we get the English word "Easter." So Merry Christmas.

This was the goddess of fertility, the goddess of sex. And they were burning incense to the queen of heaven. And I have to say this. I'm not going to hold back, like Jeremiah. Isn't it interesting that they refer to Mary as the queen of heaven in Roman Catholicism?

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

I tell you, as God as my witness, it is demonic and straight from the pit of hell, period. That's the queen of heaven. This is a false goddess, and God's people are burning incense to her? Well, not much has changed.

"And pour our drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes [How in-your-face and brazen is this?] in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem.

For then [Watch this] we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine."

The women also said, "And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husband's permission?"

Oh, oh, that was good. The first sin: Man blamed the woman. Here: The woman's blaming the man. We had their approval. That's why we did it.

Well, wait a minute now. I just want to make sure I'm clear here on what you're saying. Are you telling me that when you were burning incense to the queen of heaven, that your life was just going so well? And as soon as you stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and started obeying God, that's when everything was bad in your life?

Okay. I spent a little bit of time on this. I'll make it very quick. Again, I'll just throw it out there. When you're in sin, sin is in you and it corrupts you, it perverts you. It gets into your mind and into your heart, so that up is down and down is up, good is evil and evil is good.

For them to say that, do you think they really believe that, or they just making excuses? No, they really believe that.

How is it possible that they could believe something so wrong? Because that's what sin does. And this is why it is that God — I've heard it said this way. It's so good and it's so true. Sin is not bad because it's forbidden. Sin is forbidden because it's bad.

In other words, God says in the "tender" commandments: "Thou shalt not." Why? Because I love you so much. And in the day that you do this, it will destroy you. And I love you so much to see that happen to you. I'm trying to protect you from unnecessary disaster and calamity and catastrophe in your life. This is what sin does. It messes you up, the way you think. See, now you see God through your sin, not your sin through God.

So it discolors and changes the whole complexion of everything. And you get so messed up, so perverted, so corrupted that you'll say something like this and actually believe it. Yeah, you know when I was in the world, sinning, man, my life was great. When I started walking with the Lord, man, my life was horrible.

Okay, wow! Alrighty, then. Man, that's messed up, isn't it?

"Then [Verse 20] Jeremiah spoke to all the people, the men, the women, and all the people who had given him that answer —saying: [What is the matter with you people?] Verse 21, [He doesn't say that] (Chuckling)

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

He says, **“The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and did it not come into His mind? So the Lord could no longer bear it because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed. Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as it is this day.**

Because [Verse 23] you have burned incense and because you have sinned against the Lord and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord or walked in His law, in His statutes or in His testimonies, therefore this calamity has happened to you, as at this day.” *[You brought it on yourself; sin is its own reward]*

Moreover [Verse 24] Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women, “Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt! Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, “We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.” You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows! ”

This is Romans 1. God just says okay, and He gives them over to their sin, their idolatry. No, you will. You just got done getting in My face saying, this is what — we're going to do whatever we want. We want to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and we're going to burn incense to the queen of heaven. Okay. Yes, you will, as a matter of fact.

“Therefore [Verse 26] hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: ‘Behold, I have sworn by My great name,’ says the Lord, ‘that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “The Lord God lives.”

Behold, I [Verse 27] will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them.

Yet [Verse 29] a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah. And all the remnant of Judah who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell there shall know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs. *[I love it when God does that. We'll see; better said, you'll see]*

And [Verse 29] this shall be a sign to you,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for adversity.’ *[And verse 30, last verse]*
“Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy who sought his life.”

And it happened. This exactly happened. Oh, how I wish I could end on a perkier note. But I can't. I do want to close this way, though, and we're almost done. I appreciate your patience.

Man, just wow, right? Do you know that what we just read were, it's believed, the last recorded prophecies of Jeremiah in terms of the chronological order of events?

Now, when we pick it up, Lord willing, next week from *Chapter 45* on through *Chapter 52* to the rest of the book, it's — well, it's pretty rough, but it's the pronouncement of judgment on the surrounding nations.

Jeremiah 42-44
God Directs Our Steps and Stops
J.D. Farag

Chapter 45, again, is about Jeremiah's scribe. But we just read — this turns the page, as it were, literally, we turn a corner now starting in *Chapter 45*. This is the end of Jeremiah's prophesying and prophecies. We just read the last recorded one.

Now, while Scripture is silent on whatever happened to Jeremiah, there is no silence on the part of those who speculate about what happened to Jeremiah. And I've always been taught that when the Scriptures are silent, I would do well to also remain silent as God deemed it necessary to have it so. Remember last week we were talking about Ishmael and how I wanted *Verse 15*?

So you remember what happened? You prayed for me, right? Because that was a rough week for me because I wanted to find out what happened to that guy. I wanted to see him get his end, and crickets... You never hear from the guy again.

And I think on the other side of that, the same thing is here again. God did not deem it necessary to include that in the Scriptures. God has to have had a reason.

Now, last week, with regards to Ishmael, I believe it's because the Ishmael spirit is alive and well today, the evil, I mean, pure evil. This guy was pure evil. And I think you flip it around the other way. And the same thing is said about Jeremiah. The Jeremiah spirit is also alive and well today.

And if you're anything like me, and I suspect you are, and I'll close with this, I really don't want to know. I've just grown to love Jeremiah so much.

As we near the completion of this amazing book, and if he met with a horrible death, as some speculate that he did, I actually don't want to know that. It's that saying in the secular sense, ignorance is bliss? Solomon in Ecclesiastes writes, "**With much knowledge comes much sorrow.**"

I think that God may be sparing us from the sorrow of what happened to Jeremiah. So God is gracious, isn't He? There, did you see how I did that, end on that? Yeah, all right!

Kapono, come on up. Why don't you stand up? Wow, that was a good save, as they say, right?

Oh, Lord, thank You for Jeremiah. Oh, tough stuff again, but good stuff. Lord, I know that we're all prone to come down really hard on these guys for what they did. But truth be made known, we're just as prone, maybe not on such a large scale, it doesn't rise to the level of necessarily what they did, but in a smaller way, in our own way, we too in our unbelief don't trust You. We take matters into our own hands, and when we do, it's to our own peril.

Lord, I think that's the lesson and the takeaway from these chapters tonight. Lord, I just pray that we'll not just leave this here, that the Holy Spirit will begin that process as only You can, Lord, to just start blessing this to our hearts, the application of it to our lives, maybe searching our hearts if there is any areas in our lives that maybe we're getting too dangerously close to this, and You're saying, no, You're directing us to stop and not go any further.

Lord, You need to make it so clear that a fool could not err thereof. Lord, thank You. Thank You for the clarity and the strength of these chapters. We need that strength. Thank You, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.