

“RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION”

Studies in the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 42:1-44:30

“The Thin Line Between Hero and Villain: Part 2”

Introduction: This section of Jeremiah concludes the historical narrative. Thus far we have seen the fall of the kingdom of Judah due to persistent sin, the Babylonian kingdom functioning as an instrument of God’s providence, and the Ammonites functioning as an instrument of the kingdom of darkness. The story picks up with the remnant of Judah trying to discern their next step after the treachery of Ishamel.

I. Seeking direction from the Lord is always the best first step (Jeremiah 42:1-22)

- In the aftermath of multiple tragedies, the people seek the counsel of the Lord. The people claim that they will do whatever the Lord tells them to do.
- Jeremiah had to wait 10 days for an answer. Waiting is a demonstration of faith. Waiting demonstrates that you trust God, that you know He loves you, and that you know He will help you.
- What is the meaning of “God relented?” Relent is an emotion word connected to grief (Genesis 6:6). God expresses anger (Psalm 7:11), compassion (Judges 2:18), joy (Jeremiah 32:41), and other emotions. The people are directed to stay in the land and prosper.
- If the people leave and go to Egypt, they will experience judgement. The temptation to flee to Egypt centered around the fear of death by violence and the fear of lacking provision.
- Why do people ask for prayer when they have no desire to change or repent? If you choose to seek God prepare your heart to repent and obey.

II. What if God’s answer is not what you want to hear? (Jeremiah 43:1-13)

- Johanan and other arrogant men attributed Jeremiah’s message to Baruch and not God. They were afraid of the Babylonians and refused to trust God. How do you respond when you don’t get the answer you want?

- Johanan led the people in disobedience to Egypt. How could the people so easily disobey such a sharp warning from the Lord? Persistent disobedience is evidence of a hard heart. True obedience is when your reverence of God overrides your fear of anything else.
- Jeremiah buries stones in the spot where Nebuchadnezzar would set up during his invasion of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar is called God's servant. The same king who threw people into a fiery furnace because they would not worship an idol is eventually humbled by God. We should rejoice that we serve a God who transforms villains into heroes.

III. The safest place to be is in obedience to God (Jeremiah 44:1-30)

- The Lord recounts the recent punishment that came upon the former inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah because of idolatry. Idolatry is an abomination to the Lord. An abomination is something that causes horror and disgust. Idolatry is disgusting to God (Deuteronomy 5:7). Their persistent abominations activated the judgement of God based on the conditional Mosaic covenant.
- The people in Egypt were worshipping idols. When people sin, they are responsible for the consequences. Do we fully understand the danger of practicing idolatry? The curses of the law that activated against the residents of the kingdom of Judah will activate against the people who fled to Egypt.
- Jeremiah 44:16-17 is one of the saddest passages of Scripture and a blatant record of rebellion against God. It is no profit to judge the people in this text if we are just as guilty as living in open rebellion against the Lord's command to make disciples.
- The issue with the people in the text was they attributed hardship and suffering to failing to worship a false god. They were deceived by a doctrine of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). What is truly sad is that entire households agreed to worship false gods. The husbands were functioning as the head of household and leading their families to destruction. Men will be held accountable for the spiritual leadership they provide to their families. The men in this passage failed their families. They allowed the devil to lead them into destruction. Will you do better?
- The people thought Egypt was a safe place from violence. They thought worshipping idols was a safe place spiritually so they could have economic security. They thought wrong. The curses of the Law

were activated against them, and judgement was coming upon Egypt and the Jews living there.

- Pharaoh Hophra seemed like a hero to the disobedient people. He attempted to come to Zedekiah's aid during the siege of Jerusalem and he welcomed the Jewish refugees in the aftermath of Ishmael's treachery. He is a villain because any leader who promotes false god worship is a villain. Destruction was decreed upon Pharaoh Hophra and the gods of Egypt. He was eventually killed by his enemies.
- This concludes the narrative history recorded in Jeremiah. It is a history saturated with heroes and villains and good versus evil. The main take away is that God is always the Hero of the story.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

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