

Aftermath of Wrath (Jeremiah 39:11–40:6)

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Introduction

This message finishes the narrative section of Jeremiah and details the events that followed the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the year 586 B. C.

The section before us today describes the aftermath of that wrath and how the remnant left in the land did not learn from their experience.

I. The Narrative

1. Jeremiah was released from house arrest (39:11–14; 40:1–6).

Jeremiah was mistakenly taken in chains with the other captives and brought to Ramah to prepare for their exile journey to Babylon. Nebuzaradan intervened at Ramah and released Jeremiah from his chains (40:2).

2. Gedaliah was installed as governor under the Chaldeans after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Gedaliah (“Yahweh is great”) was the grandson of Shaphan, a royal scribe during the rule of Josiah (2 Kings 22:3, 4). *Gedaliah assured them and warned, “Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you”* (v. 9).

3. Intrigue developed as Johanan, a general in the army, informed Gedaliah that Baalis, the king of Ammon, was sending a rebellious faction of Jews hiding in Ammon to take his life. Gedaliah did not believe him, so Johanan asked that he and his men be allowed secretly to strike down the traitor, Ishmael, and defeat the plan. The governor refused, received Ishmael, and was summarily executed. Retaliation came as Johanan heard about the death of Gedaliah and rushed to avenge him, but Ishmael escaped and returned to Ammon. Johanan rescued Ishmael’s captives.

II. Forbidden Fear

1. Desiring to flee into Egypt, Johanan asked for Jeremiah to pray for God’s mercy on them (42:2, 3).

Jeremiah responded, *“I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the Lord your God according to your request, and whatever the Lord answers you I will tell you”* (v. 4). Johanan further promised: *“May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the Lord your God sends you to us. Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God”* (vv. 5, 6).

2. Ten days later, the Lord answered Jeremiah (vv. 10–12). (Ten is the number of law and responsibility.) The Lord warned them against going to Egypt because He was about to bring the day of the Lord upon that land. If this remnant remained in Egypt, they would suffer the fate God was about to bring on those people (vv. 15–17).
3. Two major admonitions were given: (1) *“Do not fear the king of Babylon”* (v. 11), and (2) *“O remnant of Judah, ‘Do not go to Egypt.’ Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day”* (v. 19).

4. The disobedient remnant refused the word of the Lord, even after they pledged, *“We will obey the voice of the Lord.”* Their excuse was that Jeremiah was lying to them. They argued that Baruch had put Jeremiah up to discouraging them with the motive of setting the Chaldeans against them.

They went to Egypt against the Lord’s will, but He mercifully appealed to them again and warned. The same instrument of wrath that God used against Judah and Jerusalem (*“Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant”*) would be used against Egypt, and they would suffer with the Egyptians.

Later (Ch. 46), Jeremiah was to bring a word of judgment against Egypt, and in that chapter God declared: *“That day is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes”* (46:10).

5. The real issue that drove the remnant decision was idolatry. They preferred the worship of strange gods to obedience to Yahweh (Ch. 44). Again, God rehearsed, as a matter of mercy, His patience in dealing with stubborn Israel (44:4, 5, 7–9). Their incredible response is found in vv. 16–18.

III. The Day of the Lord.

1. Is the USA on the verge of suffering her “day of the Lord” (Ob. 15)?
2. The day of the Lord is not a single day at the end of the age as taught by dispensationalism. Rather, it is that day when God’s patience ends with a sinful nation and He judges that nation. The day of the Lord came on Israel in two stages.
 - a. The destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldeans was the first stage. It was not on Judah only but also on Egypt, Philistia, Moab, and Ammon (Ch. 46–49). After this God would judge Babylon for her sins (Ch. 51, 52; Isa. 13:9).
 - b. The second stage of Israel’s day of the Lord came when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in a. d. 70. On the day of Pentecost, Peter cited the prophet Joel (2:28–32), in which we read, *“In those days I will pour out my Spirit”* (v. 29). This sentence is joined to the next with the conjunction (*vav*, v.30). The statement that follows proves that the scope of the new covenant is to include Gentiles as well as the remnant of Israel: *“And it shall come to pass that everyone [Jew and Gentile] who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Paul confirmed this (Eph. 3:6).
3. There will be a final “day of the Lord” as described by Peter (2 Pet. 3:10).

Are we coming to that final day of the Lord?

“Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14). The Lord desires that His people trust Him and serve Him during their trial. They are to be salt and light, glorifying God in all that they do. We are to be faithful and to persevere. If so, there is a great promise in Jeremiah 42:10–12.