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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Faith Found in a Strange Place,
and Absent Where it Should Have
Been

June 27, 2021

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 40-44

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 40-44

Jerusalem had been conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians, many people slaughtered, and the survivors are being carried off into captivity as we come to this 40th chapter. Let's read right on through chapter 44 because we really cannot break up this narrative into pieces. Then we are going to come back and take note of several particular portions that really stand out and contain important lessons for us.

You will just shake your head in amazement as you see here the wicked, hardened, knowing disobedience and

rebellion against the Lord in spite of all His warnings, and His judgments.

Jer 40:1-16 **The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD** after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

(2) **The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him,** “The LORD your God pronounced this disaster against this place. (3) The LORD has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you.

(4) Now, behold, I release you today from the chains on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you well, but if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See, the whole land is before you; go wherever you think it good and right to go. (5) If you remain, then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam,

son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it right to go.” **So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go.**

(6) Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land.

(7) When all the captains of the forces in the open country and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land and had committed to him men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon, (8) they went to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. (9) Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men, saying, **“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.** (10) As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, to represent you

before the Chaldeans who will come to us. But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.” (11) Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as governor over them, (12) then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been driven and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance.

(13) Now Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah (14) and said to him, **“Do you know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?” But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam would not believe them.** (15) Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah at Mizpah, “Please let me go and strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life, so that all the Judeans who are gathered about you would be scattered, and the remnant of

Judah would perish?” (16) **But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, “You shall not do this thing, for you are speaking falsely of Ishmael.”**

Jer 41:1-18 In the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, one of the chief officers of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. As they ate bread together there at Mizpah, (2) Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land. (3) Ishmael also struck down all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there.

(4) On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, (5) eighty men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the LORD. (6) And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah came out from Mizpah to meet them, **weeping as he came.** As he

met them, he said to them, “Come in to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.” (7) When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men with him slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern. (8) But there were ten men among them who said to Ishmael, “Do not put us to death, for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey hidden in the fields.” So he refrained and did not put them to death with their companions.

(9) Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men whom he had struck down along with Gedaliah was the large cistern that King Asa had made for defense against Baasha king of Israel; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain. (10) Then Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah, the king's daughters and all the people who were left at Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

(11) But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

(12) they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. They came upon him at the great pool that is in Gibeon. (13) And when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him, they rejoiced. (14) So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah.

(15) But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. (16) Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him took from Mizpah all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam—soldiers, women, children, and eunuchs, whom Johanan brought back from Gibeon. (17) And they went and stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt (18) because of the Chaldeans. For they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

Jer 42:1-22 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came near **(2) and said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us— (3) that the LORD your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do.”**

(4) Jeremiah the prophet said to them, “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. I will keep nothing back from you.”

(5) Then they said to Jeremiah, “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. (6) Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”

(7) At the end of ten days the word of

the LORD came to Jeremiah. (8) Then he summoned Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest, (9) and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him: (10) **If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you. (11) Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. (12) I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land.**

(13) **But if you say,** ‘We will not remain in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God (14) and saying, ‘No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,’ (15) then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, (16) then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the

land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. (17) All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them. (18) “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more.

(19) The LORD has said to you, O remnant of Judah, ‘Do not go to Egypt.’ Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day (20) that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. **For you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says, declare to us and we will do it.’ (21) And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you. (22) Now therefore know for a certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to**

live.”

Jer 43:1-13 When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the LORD their God, with which the LORD their God had sent him to them, (2) Azariah the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah **and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there,’** (3) but Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon.” (4) So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces **and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to remain in the land of Judah.** (5) But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven— (6) the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah.

(7) And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

(8) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: (9) “Take in your hands large stones and hide them in the mortar in the pavement that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah, (10) and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy over them. (11) He shall come and strike the land of Egypt, giving over to the **pestilence those who are doomed to the pestilence, to captivity those who are doomed to captivity, and to the sword those who are doomed to the sword.** (12) I shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd cleans his cloak of vermin, and he shall go away from there in peace. (13) He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.’”

Jer 44:1-30 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, (2) “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, (3) **because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, neither they, nor you, nor your fathers.** (4) **Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!’** (5) But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods. (6) Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day. (7) And now thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, leaving you no remnant? (8) Why do you provoke me

to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live, so that you may be cut off and become a curse and a taunt among all the nations of the earth? (9) Have you forgotten the evil of your fathers, the evil of the kings of Judah, the evil of their wives, your own evil, and the evil of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? (10) They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers. (11) “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. (12) I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. (13) I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, (14) so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come

to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return to dwell there. For they shall not return, except some fugitives.”

(15) Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: (16) “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you. (17) But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster. (18) But since we left off making offerings 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.”

(19) And the women said, “When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her,

was it without our husbands' approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?”

(20) Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who had given him this answer: (21) “As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? (22) The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. (23) It is because you made offerings and because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his testimonies that this disaster has happened to you, as at this day.”

(24) Jeremiah said to all the people and all the women, “Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who are in the land of Egypt. (25) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You and your wives have declared with your mouths, and have fulfilled it with your

hands, saying, ‘We will surely perform our vows that we have made, to make offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her.’ Then confirm your vows and perform your vows! (26) Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you of 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 invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, ‘As the Lord GOD lives.’ (27) Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good. 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 of them. (28) And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who came to the land of Egypt to live, shall know whose word will stand, mine or theirs. (29) This shall be the sign to you, declares the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm: (30) 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, who was his enemy and sought his life.”

A Babylonian’s Faith

This section opens with these words:

Jer 40:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

Not until chapter 42 do we read that Jeremiah received a word from the Lord. I would suggest that the word from the Lord here that came to Jeremiah is this:

(2) The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, “The LORD your God pronounced this disaster against this place. (3) The LORD has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you.

Listen to John Calvin's comment here:

“Here, Nebuzaradan undertook the prophetic office, and spoke in high terms of God's righteous vengeance on the people. There is no doubt but that God had raised up such a teacher to the Jews; for they had for 40 years and more obstinately rejected celestial truth. God had not ceased kindly to invite them to repentance, and to promise them pardon and salvation, provided they repented....They deserved to hear such a preacher as Nebuzaradan, who now contemptuously upbraided them, that they had brought this evil upon themselves, because they had been disobedient and rebellious against God, as they had not obeyed His Word....Though the people boasted that they were holy, yet Nebuzaradan here indirectly condemned their foolish boastings, since he intimated that Jeremiah alone was worthy of being deemed one of God's servants, as though he had said, that the Jews were unworthy of the honor of glorying in God's name or professing it.”
[Commentaries, Jeremiah]

There is a lesson for us here, and it is an important one. It is the same principle

that John the Baptist preached to the wicked religious leaders:

Mat 3:9-10 And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, **God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.** (10) Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

God will be glorified and His name vindicated. His Word will be shown to be truth and will come about. *And if those who claim to be His people do not obey and glorify Him, He will raise others up who will.*

There are no doubt more examples of this very thing all around us today. When the visible church, when local churches and pastors and church members – professing Christians – will not be the holy nation and priesthood and witness to the world He commands them to be, you can be certain that He is going to raise up people who will be, and often these will come from places we would not expect. *Even a Babylonian, pagan conqueror will preach God's Word to a counterfeit*

church. A blind man will receive sight and preach to the corrupt clergy.

Innocent as a Dove but NOT Wise as a Serpent

This man named Gedaliah was appointed by the Babylonian King to rule over the Jews left in Judah. He appears to have been a good man with good intentions, ready to carry out governing under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jer 40:9-10 Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men, saying, "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. (10) As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, to represent you before the Chaldeans who will come to us. But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken."

NOTE: Dwelling in the land...in the land given to them by the Lord...is the right and proper place for His people. He brought them OUT of Egypt and into that promised land. Here the survivors who remained, few in

number, are given the opportunity to live in that place of God's blessing. There is huge application here for us as well. Live in the Land. Don't go back to Egypt. You have been redeemed by the Lamb – don't ever let someone put a yoke of slavery on you again.

Almost immediately, trouble is brewing. The enemy is at work and this time it comes in the person of this Ishmael. And Gedaliah is warned:

Jer 40:13-16 Now Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah (14) and said to him, "Do you know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?" But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam would not believe them. (15) Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah at Mizpah, "Please let me go and strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life, so that all the Judeans who are gathered about you would be scattered, and the remnant of Judah would perish?" (16) But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, "You shall not do this thing, for you are speaking

falsely of Ishmael.”

Here we meet this man Johanan. He gives Gedaliah a heads up warning about this Ammonite King’s plot to assassinate Gedaliah at the hands of Ishmael. Johanan wants to make a preemptive strike and take Ishmael out first. *But Gedaliah will not listen.* And it will result in his death and the deaths of many other good people.

“You are speaking falsely of Ishmael.”
Listen to Matthew Henry on this-

“Herein Gedaliah exercised more good humor than discretion, more of the innocence of the dove than wisdom of the serpent....Many have been ruined by being over-confident of the faithfulness of those around them.”
[Commentary on Jeremiah]

I mentioned recently this dangerous error some call “toxic positivism.” Others have described it as the “cup-is-always-half-full” philosophy. At its root is the denial of evil. But here is the reality. Look at the wicked, extreme evil in this Ishmael:

Jer 41:1-7 In the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of

Elishama, of the royal family, one of the chief officers of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. **As they ate bread together** there at Mizpah, (2) Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land.

(3) Ishmael also struck down all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there.

(4) On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, (5) eighty men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the LORD. (6) **And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah came out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he came. As he met them, he said to them, “Come in to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.”** (7) When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men with him slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern.

Wicked enemies are enabled by toxic positivism. We find far, far too much of it among people who claim to be Christians and who should see its error. Toxic positivism is the enemy of truth. It is the devil's ally. And it is deadly to body and soul.

Let's turn now to still another example of just how evil and deceptive human beings can be – particularly those who claim to be God's people:

Jer 41:11-16 But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, (12) they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. They came upon him at the great pool that is in Gibeon. (13) And when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him, they rejoiced. (14) So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. (15) But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. (16) Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him took from Mizpah all the rest of the

people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam—soldiers, women, children, and eunuchs, whom Johanan brought back from Gibeon.

Once again we see this Johanan in action and we admire him. He goes after Ishmael, who escapes, but is able to rescue the people Ishmael had taken captive. We admire him. And our admiration grows in what happens next:

Jer 42:1-6 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshai, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came near (2) and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us— (3) that the LORD your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do." (4) Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "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. I will keep nothing back from you." (5) Then they said to Jeremiah,

“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. (6) Whether it is good or bad, **we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.**”

Things seem to be right on track, don't they? Surely these people are genuine. Surely they have finally learned that God's blessing comes through obedience to Him.

But...

Jer 42:7-16 At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. (8) Then he summoned Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest, (9) and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him: (10) **If you will remain in this land**, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you. (11) Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you

are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. (12) I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land.

(13) But if you say, ‘We will not remain in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God (14) and saying, ‘**No, we will go to the land of Egypt**, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,’ (15) then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, (16) then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die.

Faith dwells in the Land. Unbelief and disobedience craves to return to Egypt. Jeremiah spoke God's Word to them, *but it was not the word they wanted*. It turns out that they had intended to do what they wanted to do no matter what God said. *And this defines the religion of so many who claim to be Christians today*. They resolve to do what they want. They resolve to love the world

and all that their “Christianity” is, is a means to have God tell them what they want Him to tell them. A religious way to get what they want.

When God’s Word turns out to be contrary to their lusts, the real nature of their heart comes out:

Jer 43:1-7 When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the LORD their God, with which the LORD their God had sent him to them, (2) Azariah the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there,’ (3) but Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon.” (4) So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to remain in the land of Judah. (5) But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven— (6) the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every

person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. (7) And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

And who they really were became even more evident:

Jer 44:15-18 Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: (16) “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you. (17) But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster. (18) But since we left off making offerings 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.”

They were nothing but idolaters just like the rest of the Jews. In the end, they chose the god they had been serving all along. Their entire profession of faith in God was a façade. And now their apostasy is complete. They will die in their sins.

Here is wisdom for us in all of this. Consider these lessons well. Christ will be proclaimed even if it seems as if the entire visible church rejects Him. Evil real, it is all around us, it is amazingly deceptive, and we must armor up and believe we are in a battle. Often, that battle is going to be against people who had pretended to be our fellow soldiers.