

## Message #46

## Jeremiah 42:1-22

Many of God's own people are fickle when it comes to God, especially when it is a time of trouble. Some people pretend to be so interested and even so spiritual, when in all reality, it is not true.

There are people who will say they are interested in understanding God's will and word, but when you show them God's word and will, they will not obey. This is one of those times in the life and times of the prophet Jeremiah.

We may recall that Ishmael and his assassins had not only killed Gedaliah and his men, along with 70 other men, but he also had kidnapped the rest of the people of Mizpah and was taking them south to the Ammonite country.

Johanan tracked him down and rescued the captives and his plan was to take them to Egypt. He was afraid that when Nebuchadnezzar learned that his own men had been killed, he would take revenge on the remaining remnant. So his plan was to take the people to Egypt. That is where he wanted to go and from **verse 21**, it appears that many were on their way to Egypt or at least they were ready and planning to go. They had stopped at Chimham, which was near Bethlehem (41:17).

**Now to this point no one has contacted Jeremiah and no one has prayed about anything.** The people are just making their own decisions and things are turning out to be a disaster.

When Gedaliah learned there was an assassination plot against him, he did not pray and he did not contact Jeremiah.

When Johanan delivered the captives and decided to go to Egypt, he did not pray and he did not contact Jeremiah.

**So what we actually have here are God's people just deciding things and no one is consulting God and no one is consulting a man who knows God and His word.**

Well finally this mess has led some of God's people to think; maybe we should talk to Jeremiah and have him talk to God about this.

What we will see here is this:

**JUST BECAUSE PEOPLE IN TROUBLE SEEM TO BE INTERESTED IN PRAYING AND KNOWING GOD'S WORD AND WILL DOES NOT MEAN THEY WILL ACTUALLY BE SERIOUS ABOUT OBEYING IT.**

According to **verses 1-3**, all the military commanders and all the people both great and small decided it was time to contact Jeremiah. This looks so right. The optics appears to be good. They went to Jeremiah and asked him to pray to God and ask God what they should do.

They wanted Jeremiah to go to God and pray to God and ask what direction they should take. They were wrestling with whether or not they should stay in the land dominated by the Babylonians or go to Egypt.

This looks good. This all appears to be the right thing to do. God's people are contacting the prophet of God and requesting that he pray and then relay to them the will of God, and they pretend to be very interested in obeying it.

According to **verse 4**, Jeremiah agreed to do that. When you think about all Jeremiah had gone through with God's people, this must have been an encouraging moment for Jeremiah. He had been put in jail for telling the word of God and will of God to the people and now they all want him to do this.

So Jeremiah said I will go to God with this matter and I will come back to you and tell you exactly what God's word and will is.

According to **verses 5-6**, the people responded with a response that would make any real minister happy. When you read the words the people are saying, you think that these people of God are really on track:

**Response #1** - May God be a true and faithful witness against us if we don't act on everything you come back and tell us. **42:5**

They are saying that they are so serious about obeying God's word that if they don't, He has every right to be a legal witness against them. God has that right with or without their promise of obedience. But this appears impressive.

**Response #2** - We will listen to the Word of God no matter what it says. We will obey it if it is pleasant or non-pleasant. **42:6**

These people give the impression that they are dead serious about listening to the word of God and obeying it. Three times in **verses 5-6** they say they will listen to the word of God. They are not serious. These are fickle, emotional, irrational people who are not stable in their faith; they are up and down.

Now I am certain that when these people went to Jeremiah to ask him to pray, they were expecting some immediate answer. When you counsel someone and tell them you need some time to pray and think about things in God's word, many don't like that. They want immediate answers. Well no one can manipulate God or His timing and He did not answer immediately.

According to **verse 7**, God's word came to Jeremiah ten days later. No prophet can demand God answer them immediately. No matter how immediate the people think the threat is, no prophet can cause God to give instant answers. God intentionally delayed this for ten days.

Sometimes people are facing what they think is an immediate threat or crisis and they go to God and want an immediate answer or solution. No one can push God around and He does things according to His timing and His will.

The prophet could take the request to God, but God determined when and where He would answer the request. A prophet always needed to make certain that he never confused “his timing and his desires with God’s time and God’s will.”

People can imagine and invent all kinds of things, actually thinking it is the will of God, but a wise person of God will carefully search the Scriptures, pray and wait on the Lord.

Ten days later, according to **verse 8**, Jeremiah called for Johanan and all the military commanders and all the people, small and great. Jeremiah wanted everyone to hear God’s answer to the prayer they wanted him to make.

According to **verse 9**, Jeremiah said the LORD the God of Israel has answered your prayer and has given me messages to share with you.

Now it appears from **verse 21** that during the ten days the people started to move toward Egypt. Jeremiah did not get back to them as quick as they would have liked, so some started to move.

When Jeremiah called the people, he gave them nine messages:

**Message #1** - Stay in this land and God will bless you. **42:10**

This is an amazing display of grace, because there is no hint that they have repented of anything. God just says if you will believe His word and if you will stay in the land, He will bless you. They would be able to build and plant in the land and prosper. God would not tear them down or uproot them. They would have a stable and blessed life, if they obeyed the word of God.

In fact, at the end of **verse 10**, God says, “I will relent concerning the calamity that I have afflicted on you.”

God says I am the One who has brought all of the judgment calamity on you. God says I am the One who has afflicted you because you have not obeyed Me, but if you start now, I will ease up on the affliction. This point is critical for God’s people of any age.

**Message #2** - Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon for God is with you. **42:11**

The impressive, intimidating king is not in charge—God is! If they obeyed the word of God, they would have no need to fear Nebuchadnezzar for God would watch over and care for His people. The important point is to fear God and obey Him. If God’s people would fear God and obey God, He would deliver them and save them. No matter who is in power, God’s faithful people have God with them and watching out for them.

**Message #3** - God and the King will show compassion on you. **42:12**

God and the king will show His mercy to His people if they would obey His word. That Hebrew word “compassion” (raham) suggests a very tender, motherly kind of care. So if the people would obey God, life would be good and tender and not hostile. God would restore His people and they would have security and prosperity, right there where they were presently living.

This is great counsel for any of God’s people no matter where they live or what they are facing. Get serious about fearing God and obeying His word and life will be good for you.

**Message #4** - Do not disobey the word and move to Egypt thinking life will be better. **42:13-14**

It is absolutely foolish for the people of God to think that life will be better if they move or if they go back to their old sinful ways and places.

Now the motive for moving back to Egypt would be that they would think they would not have to face anymore war or face anymore hunger. But if you run from the will of God, you make a major mistake, just as Jonah found out.

**Message #5** - If you do disobey and go to Egypt, God will cause bad things to happen. **42:15-17**

The irony of all of this is that the people really believe that if they move, they will escape problems; the reality is if they move, they will move into the very problems they think they will escape.

These people thought if they stayed in the land they would face horrible problems; God says you go to Egypt and that is where you will face horrible problems.

God says if you disobey Me, thinking it will lead to great freedom, know that it will not lead to freedom, but poverty, hardship and death.

God says if you disobey Me and move, I will track you down and you will be killed by the sword and by famine and you will die there. Egypt is not the place of life and blessing, but of death. You will die by pestilence and there will be no survivors.

The key to life and blessing is to know God’s word and obey it. Do not run to the world when things aren’t good.

**Message #6** - If you do disobey God and go to Egypt, His anger will be poured out on you. **42:18**

God had already poured out His wrath on Jerusalem and He would do the same thing for His people who would not obey Him and head to Egypt.

**Message #7** - God has directly spoken to you on this issue. **42:19**

Jeremiah said you asked me to pray for you and I have, and I have told you exactly what God's word has said. Do not go to Egypt.

**Message #8** - You haven't deceived me or God, but only yourselves. **42:20-21**

Apparently the people asking Jeremiah to pray had no intention of obeying the word of God. Jeremiah knew that they were heading to Egypt, no matter what he said. Their talk about wanting to do God's will was just that-talk.

**Message #9** - You will die as a judgment of God in Egypt. **42:22**

Wouldn't you think that people who had seen God destroy Jerusalem because of His people's disobedience would want to do God's will now? Wouldn't you think they would finally learn their lesson and say, "Let's obey God"?

That is not how these people operated.

The best place and the safest place for God's people to be, when living in the face of threats, is in the will of God.

Being in the will of God means knowing and obeying God's word no matter what the circumstances appear to be.