

**Lesson #53 • Hebrews 11:35b-38**

Victory Over Circumstances

**“Some Died by Stoning”**

**Life & Times of Jeremiah • Part 6 of 6**

**• H A N D O U T •**

▶ Two months later, Gedaliah was murdered by Ishmael, a descendant of King David. Then, the following day 70 men arrived for the purpose of worshiping the Lord at the ruins of the Temple. They were also slaughtered by Ishmael. The Jewish military leader, Johanan, and the captains of the forces attempted to pursue and capture Ishmael for his evil deeds, but he escaped.

▶▶ This is where we pick up the final threads of Jeremiah's story. Johanan and the captains were afraid of the potential punishment from Babylon for failing to capture Ishmael after his murderous deeds, so they made plans to flee to Egypt. But before they left, they sought out Jeremiah to ask for guidance and a Word from the Lord.

*Jeremiah 42:1-3 • Then all the military leaders, including Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, approached Jeremiah the prophet. They said, "Please pray to the Lord your God for us. As you can see, we are only a tiny remnant compared to what we were before. Pray that the Lord your God will show us what to do and where to go."*

Q: Is this a legitimate request from these men toward Jeremiah? Or is something amiss?

Q: If this request was manipulative, what was their intended goal by asking for prayer?

*Jeremiah 42:4-6 • "All right," Jeremiah replied. "I will pray to the Lord your God, as you have asked, and I will tell you everything He says. I will hide nothing from you."*

*Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord your God be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to obey whatever he tells us to do! Whether we like it or not, we will obey the Lord our God to whom we are sending you with our plea. For if we obey him, everything will turn out well for us."*

Q: What do we learn from the way Jeremiah responds to their request?

Q: Why would Johanan and the military leaders with him, add that “even if they don't like what they hear, they will obey? Did they understand they were making an Oath before God?

## God Responds and it is not what Johanan and the Military Leaders were expecting ...

*Jeremiah 42:7-17 · Ten days later the Lord gave his reply to Jeremiah.*

*So he called for Johanan son of Kareah and the other military leaders, and for all the people, from the least to the greatest. He said to them, "You sent me to the Lord, the God of Israel, with your request, and this is his reply:*

*'Stay here in this land. If you do, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you. For I am sorry about all the punishment I have had to bring upon you. Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore,' says the Lord . 'For I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power. I will be merciful to you by making him kind, so he will let you stay here in your land.'*

*"But if you refuse to obey the Lord your God, and if you say, 'We will not stay here; instead, we will go to Egypt where we will be free from war, the call to arms, and hunger,' then hear the Lord 's message to the remnant of Judah.*

*This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'If you are determined to go to Egypt and live there, the very war and famine you fear will catch up to you, and you will die there. That is the fate awaiting every one of you who insists on going to live in Egypt. Yes, you will die from war, famine, and disease. None of you will escape the disaster I will bring upon you there.'*

Q: What does the waiting time of ten days tell us?

Q: Who was called to be in the Assembly who would hear the Word of the Lord?

Q: Why would God say that he was sorry about all the punishment He had brought upon them? Does this mean that God believed He had made a mistake regarding their punishment?

Q: Why do you think the Lord was so adamant about His people not going to Egypt?

Q: What does God promise if the people will trust Him and obey his instructions?

Q: If they chose to disobey and go to Egypt, what would happen?

## Jeremiah adds some personal advice regarding God's Word ...

*Jeremiah 42:18- "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Just as my anger and fury have been poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so they will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will be an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery. And you will never see your homeland again.'*

*• "Listen, you remnant of Judah. The Lord has told you: 'Do not go to Egypt!' Don't forget this warning I have given you today. For you were not being honest when you sent me to pray to the Lord your God for you. You said, 'Just tell us what the Lord our God says, and we will do it!' And today I have told you exactly what He said, but you will not obey the Lord your God any better now than you have in the past. So you can be sure that you will die from war, famine, and disease in Egypt, where you insist on going."*

Q: What does this passage tell us about Jeremiah's understanding of the true intent of the request from Johanan and the Military Leaders?

## Jeremiah is accused of prophesying falsely ...

*Jeremiah 43:1-3 • When Jeremiah had finished giving this message from the Lord their God to all the people, Azariah son of Hoshai and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other proud men said to Jeremiah, "You lie! The Lord our God hasn't forbidden us to go to Egypt! Baruch son of Neriah has convinced you to say this, because he wants us to stay here and be killed by the Babylonians or be carried off into exile."*

Q: Why would these men be so foolhardy?

*Jeremiah 43:4-7 • So Johanan and the other military leaders and all the people refused to obey the Lord's command to stay in Judah. Johanan and the other leaders took with them all the people who had returned from the nearby countries to which they had fled. In the crowd were men, women, and children, the king's daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had left with Gedaliah.*

*The prophet Jeremiah and Baruch were also included.*

*The people refused to obey the voice of the Lord and went to Egypt, going as far as the city of Tahpanhes.*

Q: Why would they take Jeremiah and Baruch as virtual hostages with them to Egypt. What did they hope to accomplish with that move?

Q: Where was the Egyptian city of Tahpanhes?

*Jeremiah 43:8-13* · Then at Tahpanhes, the Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, "While the people of Judah are watching, take some large rocks and bury them under the pavement stones at the entrance of Pharaoh's palace here in Tahpanhes.



*Then say to the people of Judah, 'This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: I will certainly bring my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, here to Egypt. I will set his throne over these stones that I have hidden. He will spread his royal canopy over them.*

*And when he comes, he will destroy the land of Egypt. He will bring death to those destined for death, captivity to those destined for captivity, and war to those destined for war. He will set fire to the temples of Egypt's gods; he will burn the temples and carry the idols away as plunder. He will pick clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd picks fleas from his cloak. And he himself will leave unharmed. He will break down the sacred pillars standing in the temple of the sun in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of Egypt's gods.'"*

Q: What are the two names with which God is identified in this passage?

- 1.
- 2.

Q: Why is it important that God gives his identity to these rebels who have arrived in Lower Egypt?

▶ God continues to speak to His people through Jeremiah. He reminds them about what He has been willing to do to His City, Jerusalem, and to all of Judah because of the rampant sinfulness. God asks them, "Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves..." "Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers and the kings of Judah, as well as their families? Why have you left no one in Judah, even though you knew it would provoke my wrath?" Then he sadly added: All who fled to Egypt, hoping to return someday won't, with the exception of just a handful, there will be no survivors.

*Jeremiah 44:15-19* · Then all the women present and all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to idols – a great crowd of all the Judeans living in northern Egypt and southern Egypt – answered Jeremiah, "We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! We will do whatever we want.

*We will burn incense and pour out liquid offerings to the Queen of Heaven just as much as we like – just as we, and our ancestors, and our kings and officials have always done in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For in those days we had plenty to eat, and we were well off and had no troubles! But ever since we quit burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and stopped worshiping her with liquid offerings, we have been in great trouble and have been dying from war and famine."*

*"Besides," the women added, "do you suppose that we were burning incense and pouring out liquid offerings to the Queen of Heaven, and making cakes marked with her image, without our husbands knowing it and helping us? Of course not!"*

Q: Who is this "Queen of Heaven?"

Q: What reason do these people give for clinging to this pagan deity?

### Jeremiah sets the record straight ...

*Jeremiah 44:23; 27b-28a* • All these terrible things happened to you because you have burned incense to idols and sinned against the Lord . You have refused to obey him and have not followed his instructions, his decrees, and his laws."

• Everyone from Judah who is now living in Egypt will suffer war and famine until all of you are dead. Only a small number will escape death and return to Judah from Egypt.

Q: How was this fulfilled?

### The passage from which the above were taken are the last prophetic words of Jeremiah recorded in Scripture. What happened to Jeremiah after these events?

► Scripture is silent but tradition has speculated a great deal. Most speculations are obvious nonsense. But, there is one tradition that is quite credible. It is held as true by both Jewish tradition and the Roman Catholic Church.

This tradition comes from Jerome, [347 A.D.] possibly the most important scholars of the early Christian Church. He was responsible for translating the Bible into Latin. He began his studies and training at the age twelve in Rome.

Jerome wrote that Jeremiah was killed by Johanan and the Military Leaders, along with some of the others from Judah who had escaped to Egypt.

It was at Tahpanhes that Jeremiah gave his prophecy about the stones, where he explained that it would be on those stones, which he buried at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace, that Nebuchadnezzar would sit in judgment. The end result would be their deaths and the collapse of Egypt.

Furious with his message, they picked up stones and stoned Jeremiah to death on the spot.

### One last bit of legacy from Jeremiah ...

► Though the book of Lamentations has no statement about the identity of the author, it is an overwhelming conclusion that the author is Jeremiah. He wrote about what he had seen and the emotional impact as he watched his beloved City, Jerusalem, fall and burn. The result is this collection of five songs of mourning. In actuality it is a **funeral epitaph disclosing the gasping of a dying city.**

*Lamentations 1:1-3a* • How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave. Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies. After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile.

► The fourth cycle of the song-poems speaks of the unthinkable and unrepeatable. The words describe the pitiful state of the residents of Jerusalem at the end of the two-year siege. Food was gone and the people turned to cannibalism. That cycle of the song-poem concludes: Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger. But the fifth song-poem resorts to a prayer for restoration. **“Restore us, O Lord, and bring us back to you again! Give us back the joys we once had!”** But it is the third cycle of the song-poems we find Jeremiah remembering that the **Most High God is greater than the most desperate of times:**

*Lamentations 3:21-23 · Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Q: How could Jeremiah say that God's compassions never fail after all that he had been through, personally and all of the atrocities he had witnessed?

Q: But how could a loving God allow this level of suffering?

► What the Judeans suffered before going into Exile has been repeated over and over thru the ages in varying degrees. Everyone of Jesus' Apostles, with the exception of John, met horrible deaths. But it is through their deaths that we are given proof of the truth that Jesus arose from the grave. It would have taken only one of them to recant and it would have been over. But they didn't recant and were willing to suffer beyond words to populate the truth that Jesus is alive and that He paid the price of our sins. All we have to do is believe and accept the free gift he is offering.

The Apostle Paul addressed the same issue like this:

*1 Corinthians 10:11-13 · These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. **When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.***

► The final statement of Paul's passage is exactly why Jeremiah was able to say, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.”



**Next Time ◆ Lesson #54**

**“Concluding Remarks for the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Hebrews”**

