

# The WordSeekers : XtremeXplorationSundays Bible-Study Notes

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May 15, 2005

“Dodging Disaster”  
Or, “Keep the Main Thing, the Main Thing”

**FOCAL VERSES: Jeremiah 40 - 44**

**Observation** ‘Satellite-Level’ Jeremiah Chapters: 40

**Chapter 38:** Jeremiah is put into a cistern but is released with the aid of Ebed-Melech. Jeremiah is now in what we might call today, ‘a low security facility.’

**Chapter 39:** Jerusalem falls to the Chaldeans. King Zedekiah is bound in chains, he witnesses the murder of his sons and his eyes are plucked out before he is marched off to captivity in Babylon.

586 B. C. Jerusalem now lay in ruins with no habitation whatsoever.

**Chapters 40 and 41 (Jeremiah’s Release)** is about Jeremiah’s release as a prisoner. Nebuzaradan, a captain of the Babylonian guard, acknowledges that the Hebrews sinned against the LORD and sets releases Jeremiah from his chains. Unlike the Jews this leader suspected the God of the Jews was in control of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

He gave him his release indicating he could go anywhere he desired. Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah and went to stay under the (Babylonian) governorship of Gedaliah, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar.

All those who had scattered about during the three sieges by Babylon reunited in Mizpah.

Jeremiah went to Mizpah, the administrative camp of the Chaldeans (Babylonians). It was here that the remaining poor and unskilled Jews lived. The military commanders were Ishmael and Johanan.

Johanan confided with Gedaliah that there was a conspiracy brewing to kill him. Gedaliah ignored or denied this. However, Ishmael came with 10 men to visit Gedaliah and murdered him along with others.

He coerced 80 religious leaders from other areas and slaughtered 70 of them. Ten escaped death as they bought their way to freedom. Johanan intercepted Ishmael as he was escaping to Ammon. Ishmael fled but the people now joined with Johanan as they now decided to go to Egypt stopping at Bethlehem.

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**Chapter 42 (Jeremiah's Counsel)** tells of the deceitfulness of the Jews as they ask Jeremiah for counsel as to "the way we should walk and the thing we should do." They're basically saying they will do whatever the LORD tells them (vv5 , 6)

Jeremiah gets word from God 10 days later and tells the people what the LORD told him to tell the Jews. The LORD commanded them (vv10 – 12) to stay in the land and not fear the king of Babylon because the Lord was with them to deliver and rescue. If they refused to listen to this and obey then disaster would fall upon them (vv13 – 16).

**Chapter 43 (Jeremiah's Messages)** True to form, the remnant's response was denial and accusatory calling Jeremiah a liar. They even claimed that Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, had "set him against us." (v3). Ignoring the advice from God, Johanan lead the remnant on toward Egypt settling in Tehpanhes.

A prophet now for 40 years, these were likely Jeremiah's last words to the people. Concerning Egypt and Babylon, Jeremiah, in a symbolic action (vv9 – 13), took some stones and placed them in mortar in the pavement at the entrance to the pharaoh's palace in Tehpanhes. This was to show the Jews that God would eventually bring Nebuchadnezzar to Egypt and conquer them. (Egypt was invaded in 568/67 B. C. by Nebuchadnezzar.)

The message for obedience was clear; the choice to ignore was certain disaster.

**Chapter 44** opens with a message given in 580 B. C. from God about the disaster that had fallen on them and why this happened. Jeremiah was in Egypt against his will. This chapter is fully devoted to God's disdain of His people's idolatry and total disobedience.

### **Interpretation: 44: 2 – 7 Disaster Because of Idolatry**

These verses can be viewed as God's final plea for the people to obey Him. In these verses God is pointing to the many messages He gave to His people through His prophets, including Habakkuk, Nahum, Obadiah, and Daniel.

Clearly, God is angry with the choices the people have made! In these verses see how many times words denoting anger, wrath, detestable, etc. are used.

**44:8 Disaster of Evidences:** Here's what God is saying the people have done (their evidences or testimonies) with the result...

"[They] will be cut off and become an object of cursing and insult among all the nations of the earth."

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### **44:9 -10: Disaster of Unrepentance:**

God is reminding the people of the evils of their fathers and their kings and their wives and the “they have not become humble to this day.”

V11: “Therefore, ...I am determined to bring disaster on you and to destroy all Judah. I will take away the remnant ... all will perish in Egypt ... from the least to the greatest will die ... none will return except a few.”

### **44:18, 28: Disaster of Delusion:**

V18: The people blindly blame the failure of their “queen of heaven” for their problems. Queen of heaven likely the goddesses of love and fertility.

V28: Here God tells what is to happen. Only a few will escape from death. And that, “the ones who stay will surely know whose word stands, Mine or theirs [i.e., the idols].”

### **44: 29 and 30: Consequences of Habitual Disobedience**

The LORD declares the punishment for His people in Egypt and that Pharaoh Hophra will be overruled by King Nebuchadnezzar.

“Our God Reigns”

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### Life Application: How to Avoid Disaster in Your Decision-Making (source: Charles Stanley)

Colossians 1:9 Paul wrote to the people in the Colossian church that they “be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will.” Making good, sound decisions is more than just “giving it your best shot and hoping for the best to happen”

Ask the following questions:

- “Father, what would YOU have me do?”
- What is the WISE course of action?”

How do we, then, KNOW God’s will?

#### **A. Determined Will:**

1. unchangeable things, such as He is in control
2. fulfillment of prophecies and divine promises

#### **B. Desired Will:**

Things that we can determine because of the “free will” option God has given us.

Paraphrasing Jeremiah 29:11 – 13, God’s plan is for our good, and we can discover it if we wholeheartedly seek it.

So, when the need arises to make a huge decision, consider the following seven questions. Answer these questions BEFORE making your go/no-go decision.

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These questions are taken from a message by Charles Stanley. Some points are paraphrased; other added by this writer.

### **Question #1: Is it Consistent with the Bible?**

“Search & Internalize Scripture”

Check Biblical references that apply to your situation. Use Scripture as a guide.

### **Question #2: Is this a Wise Decision?**

”Choices vs. Consequences”

Ask related questions such as What are the future consequences? Am I rushing into this? Where is this going to take me? Will it create debt? Will it harm someone in some way or fashion?

### **Question #3: Can I Honestly Ask God to Enable Me to Achieve This?**

“Consider Ethical, Legal, Compromising Aspects”

Is this something God would approve of? Would my pastor approve of it? Does my spouse approve of it? Does it compromise my Christian values in any way?

### **Question #4: Do I have Genuine Peace About This?**

“Internal Peace or Unrest”

Colossians 3:15 says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” Do you know what is genuine ‘peace?’ Try this: as you lie down to sleep with the lights turned off, raise your situation up to the Lord. If you sense any uneasiness regarding your decision, stop and wait before deciding.

If, on the other hand, it is clear that your decision is God’s will, then go forward.

Listen to that “small, still voice” of God within you.

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### **Question #5: Does This Fit Who I Am As a Follower of Jesus?**

“To Bear Good Fruit or Not”

As Charles Stanley put it, “Some things just do not fit a child of God.” For example, we should not do anything to our body since it is “the temple of the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

We should act as Christians and not just talk as Christians. Therefore, Stanley goes on to say “...if we claim to be Christians, it would not be fitting to hold a grudge, gossip, have inappropriate relationships, or express unduly harsh criticism.”

### **Question #6: Does This Fit God’s Overall Plan for My Life?**

We should consider how our decision will impact God’s overall plan for you. The inference is that you already recognize the fact that you were put here on planet Earth for a reason, a purpose. Once accepted, are your decisions and actions in concert with your ‘purpose?’

God has given us free will. He provides us with options along the way of life; our responsibility is to make choices consistent with His plan for you.

### **Question #7: Will This Decision Honor God?**

Ask the following questions of yourself: Am I showing reverence and respect for the heavenly Father by taking this course of action? Is it evident by what I am doing that I acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lord and master of my life?

The converse to this is that we are simply “doing our own thing.”

As Christians we are constantly under watchful eye of the unbelievers, the world. The bottom line is this: do our decisions reflect an obedient heart toward God?

### **Conclusion**

Luke 14: 26 – 33 tells us of the price to be paid as a follower of Christ. We may be socially ostracized, declined for a job promotion, misunderstood, criticized. However, no matter what happens to us—as Christ followers—God’s plan is what should be first and foremost in our life’s plan.

God wants us to be happy while on this earth. He wants us to be “blessable people.’ Recognize that ‘He gives us life abundantly’.

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However He also wants us to keep this 'happiness' in perspective. Our "pursuit of happiness" should not be our 'master passion.' We should not be obsessed with our achievements in this world--at the expense of our faith, the pursuit of a growing Christian maturation process, and serving God in our church, family and community.

Finally, the following oft-heard saying is so very succinct: "The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart." Let's each of us 'take this to heart' and be "ambassadors for Christ" (as the Apostle Paul wrote) as we make life's huge decisions.