

AFTER THE FALL

Thursday, October 26

Reading: Jeremiah 41-42

Jeremiah 42:5 *Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us. 6 Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the LORD our God."*

Though he was obviously a godly man, Gedaliah did not have the sense to heed the warnings about assassination. Ishmael was a Babylonian-hating Jewish prince who saw Gedaliah as a traitor to the Jewish cause. During a meal with Gedaliah, Ishmael and his associates struck down and killed the governor. They then proceeded to slaughter the Jews in his court and the Babylonian soldiers who were present.

The next day, a group of 80 pilgrims approached Mizpah with grain offerings to mourn the destruction of the Temple. However when they accepted Ishmael's offer to present them to Gedaliah, he killed them for their loyalty to the Babylonian-appointed governor. These rebels then made slaves of the remaining population in Mizpah (probably including Jeremiah) and began the trip back to their ally in Ammon. But when the Jewish army officers heard what had happened, they gathered their troops and rescued the people, though Ishmael and some of his men escaped.

The officers and people were frightened. How would Nebuchadnezzar respond to the assassination of his governor? Some suggest it would be best to flee to the protection of Egypt. They turn to Jeremiah and ask him to pray to the Lord to find out what they should do. They promise that whatever God says to them, they will obey!

Jeremiah agrees and returns in ten days with God's reply. God promised to build them up and not tear them down; to plant them, not uproot them. They should stay in the land and not fear the king of Babylon for God was with them to save them. Now the people must make their choice. Will they obey God or disobey and go their own way again?

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. After the fall of Jerusalem, perhaps the people thought they had seen the last of bloodshed and trouble. However, it was not to be! This world is full of political and military intrigue. How do you respond to it? With fear or with faith?
2. God did not whitewash His answer to the people. They had a clear choice: obey God, stay in the land, and enjoy His compassion and protection or disobey and go to Egypt where they would experience the same judgments brought on Jerusalem and be "an object of cursing and horror, of condemnation and reproach" (42:18). God has made His salvation plan just a clear today. Repent and believe in Christ to receive eternal life or reject Him and suffer eternal punishment. Which side will you choose?