

## JOHANAN: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN GOD'S MESSAGE SMARTS?

### ***“Once Upon a Time”—The Capture of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:1-10)***

- Vv. 1-3 – Jerusalem had been besieged for 30 months, had been breached, and had been finally captured by the Chaldeans/Babylonians.
- Vv. 4-7 – King Zedekiah had been captured and sentenced with watching his family and nobles be killed, being blinded and chained, and being deported to Babylon.
- Vv. 8-9 – The Chaldeans burned Jerusalem and destroyed her walls; they also deported most of the people of the city to Babylon.
- V. 10 – The poorest of the people were left behind in Judah.

### ***The Introduction of Characters – The Aftermath (Jer. 40:6-12)***

- V. 6 – The Chaldeans appointed Gedaliah to be the governor of the land, stationed in Mizpah.
- V. 7-8 – Those generals who had fought in the 30-month siege of Jerusalem now return (probably from hiding) to Mizpah, having heard the news of Babylon's return to Babylon and Gedaliah's promotion. Johanan is one of these generals (cf. II Kings 25:23).
- LIVE THE MOMENT: shock at the destruction, heaviness over the work ahead to rebuild, wondering how the remnant would fare
- Vv. 9-12 – Gedaliah turns out to be a great leader:
  - He encourages the people to stay in the land and peacefully submit to the new rulers.
  - He comforts the people to not fear as he will stand between them and the Babylonians.
  - He keeps the people busy rebuilding their way of life in the land.
  - Those Jews who had fled as refugees to the surrounding areas hear about his great leadership and decide to return
  - The result is that the people enjoy a very abundant harvest time.
  - LIVE THE MOMENT: joy, pride, overturning of misfortune, thanksgiving for the success of the remnant

### ***The Inciting Moment –The Assassination Plot Jeopardizes Harmony (Jer. 40:13-16)***

- Vv. 13-14 – Johanan and his companions get wind that the King of Ammon had hired their fellow-general, Ishmael, to assassinate Gedaliah. They warn their leader, but he does not believe them.
- Vv. 15-16 – So, Johanan pulls Gedaliah aside privately, asking for permission to secretly dispose of Ishmael before he gets to the governor, but Gedaliah accuses Johanan of lying to him.
- LIVE THE MOMENT: hurt, frustration, confusion, fear

### ***The Rising Action – The Assassination (Jer. 41:1-10)***

- Vv. 1-3 – Ishmael does indeed assassinate Gedaliah, the one appointed by the King of Babylon. He also kills all the Jews with him and the Babylonian bodyguards. LIVE THE MOMENT: fear, despair, anger
- Vv. 4-8 – The next day, when Gedaliah's death was still unknown, 80 men come to Mizpah to mourn with Gedaliah about the destruction of Jerusalem. Ishmael deceptively acts piously and hospitable, weeping and meeting them at the gates and inviting them into the city. As soon as they enter the city, Ishmael kills all of them except those who reveal the location of hidden food. LIVE THE MOMENT (vv. 6-7—like watching a movie)

- Vv. 9-10 – Ishmael disposes of all the bodies in the cisterns and takes captive all the king’s daughters and the remnant of the people of Mizpah, and heads back to Ammon.

### ***The Climax – The Confrontation (Jer. 41:11-15)***

- Vv. 11-12 – Johanan (all of a sudden, the leader) and his companions hear of Ishmael’s atrocities and march to Mizpah to confront this menace.
- Vv. 13-15 – When they found him, the hostages immediately fled to Johanan, but Johanan and eight of his men escaped to Ammon.

### ***The Falling Action – Plan to Flee to Egypt (Jer. 41:16-18)***

- Vv. 16-18 – Johanan then took all the people and camped in a location outside of Bethlehem that would provide them with a quick escape to Egypt, which was his plan since he was afraid of the retaliation from Babylon.
- LIVE THE MOMENT
  - Fear
  - Anger/exasperation at Ishmael and Gedaliah and himself perhaps for not being a stronger leader earlier with Gedaliah
  - Burdens of sudden leadership responsibilities
  - The joy of an abundant harvest flees before the certainty of total annihilation through the Chaldean’s retaliation
  - A bit of hero’s pride with a leader’s stubbornness
  - Survival instincts

### ***The Second Rising Action – Momentary Pause to Get God’s Signature (Jer. 42)***

- Vv. 1-6 – Although he has already made up his mind concerning his course of action, before they leave for Egypt, Johanan gets a pious idea of checking with God first concerning his plan.
  - All the people, small and great, agree to this and ask Jeremiah to pray to God (v. 1).
  - They want God to tell them what to do (v. 3).
  - They call God to witness against them if they do not obey the whole message which God gives to Jeremiah and which he promises to rehearse to them.
  - Whether the message is pleasant or unpleasant, they promise to listen to and obey God, so that they will in turn be blessed.
  - LIVE THE MOMENT: perhaps the thing to do and done in order to ease consciences or to meet a normal procedure, but committed to thoughtlessly)
- Vv. 7-22 – After 10 days (that must have driven Johanan nuts) Jeremiah tells them that God’s plan is for them to stay in the land; only then will He bless and protect them (vv. 10-11). To flee to Egypt would warrant certain judgment (vv. 15-17). Jeremiah also acknowledges that Johanan already plans to disobey God, thus exposing Johanan’s piety to have only been hypocrisy (vv. 19-21).

### ***The Second Climax – Johanan Rejects God’s Leadership (Jer. 43:1-7)***

- Vv. 1-7 – Johanan did not care to have his Commander-in-Chief so criticize his plan; he was, after all, the people’s hero and leader now.
  - Immediately after Jeremiah was done, Johanan responded in defiance. He hadn’t heard what he wanted to hear.
  - He flatly rejected God’s Word (v. 4, 7). In fact, he accused Jeremiah of being a liar—quite ironic, for the last person to accuse someone of being a liar was himself dead, having to eat his own words quite unpleasantly. He also accused Jeremiah of treason.

- At the root was “pride” (v. 2)—that little phrase really unlocks the moral/message/point/lesson of this whole story. The indictment is that, in their heart, these men were arrogant and insolent. God viewed this a nothing short of insubordination and rebellion.

### ***The Falling Action & Conclusion – Johanan in Egypt and the Prophecy (Jer. 43:8-13)***

- Vv. 4-7 – Johanan takes everyone to Egypt.
- Vv. 8-13 – In Tahpanhes, God reiterates his judgment upon this rebellion in a prophecy to Jeremiah.

### ***The Moral of the Story – What do you do when God’s Word smarts? Or, what do you do when God’s Word doesn’t make sense?***

- Johanan added 2 plus 2 and got 4, but God told him that it equaled 5...so, how would Johanan respond? He acted “arrogantly” by trusting his own plan instead of his Commander’s. After all he had been through in the last 7-8 months, he trusted himself and would not be told what to and what not to do. He rejected God, completely revealing his hypocrisy and pride that he had covered with false piety in chapter 42.
- We frequently listen to hear only what we want to hear. We respond in rebellious pride when God’s Word doesn’t match our tastes. When may we be guilty of this same sin?
  - ...When our parents shoot down a plan of ours.
  - ...When a spiritual leader (or peer, friend, family member, inferior) confronts us about a specific sin.
  - ...When preaching convict us concerning an area that we had guarded or been ignorant of.
  - ...When a counselor gives advice/direction that is opposed to what we want to hear.
  - ...When circumstances in life (God’s sovereignty) clearly “fall out” in a manner that forces us to change plans.
  - ...When God’s Word addresses a difficult situation in life, with exhortations that are difficult and seemingly unpleasurable to follow.

The temptation to respond in belligerent arrogance in these situations only increases when we are the one in leadership or looked up to, or if we have been doing our very best to be wise and smart. We often can get caught up in taking care of others, that we overlook ourselves.

- The root is pride, which must be confessed, turned from, and replaced with active humility. Behind the scenes, God is in serene control.