

6/29/25

Sermon Title: Ishmael's Rebellion and the Wandering of the Remnant in Judah

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 41:1-18

(Jeremiah 41:1) In the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood and had been one of the king's officers, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. While they were eating together there,

(Jeremiah 41:2) Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, killing the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land.

(Jeremiah 41:3) Ishmael also killed all the men of Judah who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Babylonian^[a] soldiers who were there.

(Jeremiah 41:4) The day after Gedaliah's assassination, before anyone knew about it,

(Jeremiah 41:5) eighty men who had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes and cut themselves came from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, bringing grain offerings and incense with them to the house of the LORD. ⁶

(Jeremiah 41:6) Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he met them, he said, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam."

(Jeremiah 41:7) When they went into the city, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men who were with him slaughtered them and threw them into a cistern.

(Jeremiah 41:8) But ten of them said to Ishmael, "Don't kill us! We have wheat and barley, olive oil and honey, hidden in a field." So he let them alone and did not kill them with the others.

(Jeremiah 41:9) Now the cistern where he threw all the bodies of the men he had killed along with Gedaliah was the one King Asa had made as part of his

defense against Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with the dead.

(Jeremiah 41:10) Ishmael made captives of all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah—the king’s daughters along with all the others who were left there, over whom Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

(Jeremiah 41:11) When Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers who were with him heard about all the crimes Ishmael son of Nethaniah had committed,

(Jeremiah 41:12) they took all their men and went to fight Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They caught up with him near the great pool in Gibeon.

(Jeremiah 41:13) When all the people Ishmael had with him saw Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers who were with him, they were glad.

(Jeremiah 41:14) All the people Ishmael had taken captive at Mizpah turned and went over to Johanan son of Kareah.

(Jeremiah 41:15) But Ishmael son of Nethaniah and eight of his men escaped from Johanan and fled to the Ammonites.

Flight to Egypt

(Jeremiah 41:16) Then Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers who were with him led away all the people of Mizpah who had survived, whom Johanan had recovered from Ishmael son of Nethaniah after Ishmael had assassinated Gedaliah son of Ahikam—the soldiers, women, children and court officials he had recovered from Gibeon.

(Jeremiah 41:17) And they went on, stopping at Geruth Kimham near Bethlehem on their way to Egypt

(Jeremiah 41:18) to escape the Babylonians. They were afraid of them because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land.

Chapters 40 to 44 of this book record the actions of those who remained in the land of Judah after its fall.

Although they had witnessed Jerusalem's devastating destruction, Judah's downfall, and the captivity of their fellow countrymen due to their own sins, those who remained in Judah did not humble themselves.

They neither repented nor turned back to God but continued to commit evil without hesitation.

They were like bad figs, too rotten to be eaten.

This chapter records a series of events in which Ishmael, a member of the royal family and a military commander, assassinates Gedaliah—the governor of Judah appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—and is then subdued by Johanan, the representative of the military officers.

After King Zedekiah of Judah was taken captive to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, grandson of Shaphan, as governor over the devastated land of Judah.

Gedaliah, following the will of God, served the king of Babylon and sought to help the remnant of Judah settle and live in the ruined land.

Because of this, peace seemed to settle in Judah, and a glimmer of hope for the future began to emerge.

But it was short-lived.

Power struggles among leaders soon erupted, leading to Gedaliah's assassination and plunging Judah into chaos reminiscent of the time of the Judges.

Ishmael, a military commander who had gained Gedaliah's trust, betrayed and murdered him.

Even though Johanan had warned Gedaliah about Ishmael's assassination plot, Gedaliah chose not to believe it and continued to trust him.

Ishmael was a member of the royal family, belonging to the house of David.

He viewed Babylon as the force that had trampled the Davidic dynasty and desired to fight against it.

So, with support and encouragement from Baalis, the king of the Ammonites who shared his views, Ishmael found an opportunity and ultimately assassinated Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Babylon.

Not only did he kill Gedaliah, but he also murdered the Judeans and Chaldean soldiers who were with him.

Such actions were a direct attack and challenge against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans, who had appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judah.

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(Jeremiah 41:3) Ishmael also killed all the men of Judah who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Babylonian^[a] soldiers who were there.

Ishmael betrayed the trust Gedaliah had extended to him, turning a table of fellowship into a scene of treachery and murder.

To Ishmael, it was more important to kill those who cooperated with Babylon—the force that had overthrown the Davidic dynasty—than to accept God's judgment.

Gedaliah's death brought an abrupt end to the effort to rebuild the community of Judah.

Out of fear of retribution from the Chaldeans after the Babylonian-appointed governor was assassinated, those who remained in Judah fled to Egypt.

As a result, only two groups remained to carry the hope of future restoration: the exiles taken to Babylon and the refugees in Egypt.

The house of David, which bore responsibility for the fall of Jerusalem, plunged Judah into further chaos and division until the very end.

The disobedience of kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah turned Jerusalem into a fiery ruin, led to Judah's destruction, and caused its people to be taken into Babylonian captivity.

To make matters worse, Ishmael—a royal descendant—assassinated Governor Gedaliah, thereby destroying the community's fledgling efforts at restoration that had begun under Gedaliah, his commanders, and the willing participation of the people.

In the end, the Davidic monarchy not only brought about the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah but also thwarted any efforts at rebuilding in its aftermath.

Ishmael's violence extended beyond killing Gedaliah and his company. He also murdered pilgrims who should have been protected.

The day after killing Gedaliah, 80 pilgrims came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria to worship.

Ishmael, pretending to weep alongside them, met them with apparent sympathy. He then lured them by saying he would take them to see Gedaliah—whom he had already killed—and murdered them, throwing their bodies into a pit.

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Although the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, with no altar remaining and most priests taken into exile, the remnant still gathered at the ruins of the temple to repent and offer worship to God.

Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria were once religious centers of the northern kingdom of Israel.

The fact that pilgrims came from these areas suggests that even after the fall of the northern kingdom, there remained among its inhabitants those who had embraced King Josiah’s reforms around 622 BC and continued to live faithfully.

These pilgrims were on their way to Jerusalem, bringing grain offerings and incense to perform sacrificial rituals.

Since it was the seventh month, it is likely they were coming to participate in the great autumn festival—the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot).

They had shaved their beards, torn their clothes, and inflicted wounds on themselves—acts symbolizing mourning and repentance.

It is likely these were expressions of grief over the destruction of the temple.

Ishmael pretended to deeply sympathize with the pilgrims' sorrow, even shedding tears, acting as if he were one who shared in their mourning.

But when they expressed a desire to visit Governor Gedaliah, Ishmael—fearing that his crime would be exposed—killed them and threw their bodies into a pit. His actions provide a stark example of the depth of human depravity and the evil that people are capable of committing.

Yet even in the midst of this cruelty, Ishmael spared the lives of ten of the pilgrims who offered him a bribe.

Afterward, Ishmael attempted to take all the remaining people in Mizpah captive and planned to lead them to the king of Ammon.

(Jeremiah 41:10) Ishmael made captives of all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah—the king's daughters along with all the others who were left there, over whom Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

The phrase "the king's daughters who remained in Mizpah" likely does not refer specifically to the biological daughters of King Zedekiah, but rather to the daughters of the Davidic royal family or the daughters of the nobles and officials.

When Johanan and all the military commanders heard the news, they pursued Ishmael and eventually found him near the waters of Gibeon.

They successfully rescued all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah.

Being outnumbered, Ishmael fled with eight of his men and escaped to the Ammonites.

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Gibeon is located approximately 4.8 kilometers (about 3 miles) southwest of Mizpah.

The people who were being forcibly taken to Ammon by Ishmael were terrified of his cruelty and the prospect of living as slaves under the Ammonites.

So when they saw Johanan and the military commanders coming to capture Ishmael, they rejoiced and returned to them.

Ishmael, along with the eight men who remained loyal to him, fled back to King Baalis of Ammon, who had instigated the plot to assassinate Gedaliah.

In contrast, Johanan and all the military commanders feared that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) would retaliate because Ishmael had murdered Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the king of Babylon.

Therefore, they planned to flee to Egypt with the people they had rescued.

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What was the fundamental reason Johanan tried to lead the people to Egypt? It was because he relied on Egypt rather than God.

Even after experiencing God's judgment, Johanan failed to trust in the Lord and continued to place his trust in human powers. In that sense, he was no different from Ishmael, who tried to take the people to Ammon.

They were both like the bad figs, unfit to be eaten.

Beloved members of Church of God Dreams,

Even after Jerusalem was set ablaze and Judah fell into ruin, our God still did not forsake the remnant.

But the problem was the condition of their hearts.

The remnant still could not fully trust in God, choosing instead to rely on visible powers and earthly nations.

Such actions ultimately led them down yet another path of destruction.

No matter how hopeless our situation may seem, God desires to begin anew even there—planting seeds of hope and a future.

But for this to happen, faith and obedience are required, for God begins a new history through those who wholly trust in Him.

We are now living in the last days—the very final moments of the end times. Unprecedented events will unfold rapidly before us.

In every situation, do not be afraid, but stay spiritually alert and rely solely on God.

Lay aside human reasoning.

Do not become like Ishmael or Johanan—bitter figs, unfit to eat.

Instead, stand rightly before the Word of God and seek His will with a sincere heart.

I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ, that you and I may stand as the faithful remnant, building God's Kingdom in these last days.