

A CHARACTER STUDY OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Lesson 10

REBELLIOUS JEWS IN EGYPT

“But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem:”

Jeremiah 44:17

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JEREMIAH'S FINAL MESSAGE

“Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.” (Jeremiah, the Prophet)
Jeremiah 44:26

No study of the life of the prophet Jeremiah would be complete without a detailed examination of chapter 44. Time has passed since the end of chapter 43. The remaining chapters of his book contain several miscellaneous prophecies added to his book but are not in context with the narrative that began in chapter 39. No one knows just how much time has passed but many scholars suggest that the date is now about 580 B.C. The refugees have dispersed themselves through all of Egypt. They are now living among the Egyptians. Jeremiah has been with the people reminding them of how they have departed, not only from their

land, but from the God of their fathers. These are the last words of the Prophet Jeremiah. Tradition states that, after a life time of preaching God's Word to these people, Jeremiah was stoned to death. They did not want to hear his words anymore.

Chapter 44 is a very stern message to these Jews in Egypt. God turns away from His own people because of their arrogance, stubbornness, and hard heartedness. God said, *"Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them."* (Jer. 44:27) The chapter is addressed to the Jews that were in the Land of Egypt. He reminds them of the destruction that came to the cities of Judah because of their wickedness and sin of idolatry. He had sent preachers to them begging them, *"Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods."* (Vs. 4) The prophets asked, "Why do you do these destructive things to yourselves?" Now, they are exiled in Egypt.

They were not even with the rest of the nation of Israel in Babylon. Yet, even here in this foreign land they would not humble themselves before the God of Heaven. Their sin has so hardened them that they are completely unrepentant. God said that He would *“cut off all Judah”* (Vs. 11) He promises them that, even in Egypt they would die *“by the sword and by the famine.”* He uses words like *“execration, or abomination, astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach”* to describe their state in Egypt. The response of the people to the message from God delivered by Jeremiah was, *“As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven.”* (Vs. 16-17) They were so blinded by their rebellion and impudent sin; that they saw the blessings that came to them from the hand of their gracious heavenly Father as the largess of the pagan Queen of Heaven. When the results of their idolatry came upon them (the want of all things, death by the sword of the enemy, and the famine) they

attributed the loss as the result of their failure to sacrifice to their pagan god. *“Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind? So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore, is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.”* (Vs 20-22) Jeremiah thundered to them that because of their impudence and refusal to obey the Lord all the evil things they had endured had come upon them. Because they had set their minds and hearts to follow the false gods of the pagans, he would turn his back on them. He would no longer look after them and protect them. The Lord pronounced a curse on them to the extent, *“that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in*

all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.” (Vs. 26b)

In the grace of God, He did allow a small number of his people to escape and return to Judah as a witness to what had happened to the people of Judah. “Scripture gives no information about Jeremiah's personal history after this, his last prophecy. There is ancient tradition that he died in Egypt,” stoned by the people he preached to so long.

"Some have remarked that in the end Jeremiah's life was a failure. He was by himself for most of his ministry. It seemed that no one listened to his message from God. He was dragged away to Egypt to live his final days in exile against his will. He was a failure as the world judges human accomplishment. But, a more balanced assessment of him would be that his words of judgment saved Israel's faith from destruction, and his words of hope finally helped his people to gain hope in God's future for them. “Jeremiah may have failed in his strenuous efforts to turn his people back to the Lord, but in his conception of

true religion as a vital, inward relationship with the living God (e.g. Jeremiah 9:24) he was to set the necessary standard, not only for the immediate future, but for all time.” (Guzik. Quoting Cundall on Jeremiah 52)

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