

Journey through Jeremiah Part 46, Judgment for Idolatry

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2017

† Jeremiah 44:1-30

Our story picks up tonight where we left off last week with the remnant of Judah disobeying the Word of the LORD and going to Egypt. God, through his Prophet, Jeremiah, had delivered the word that if they chose to go to Egypt he would allow all of their fears to follow them there, Nebuchadnezzar would come there and conquer the Egyptians and they would all die in Egypt. But, if they would obey the LORD and stay in Judah where they had been left, he would cause Nebuchadnezzar to treat them good and they could continue to dwell in Judah and live. Unfortunately, they chose to disobey. They even accused Jeremiah of lying to them and they forced him and the Scribe, Baruch, to also go into Egypt.

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

Let's pause here for a second. Notice that the LORD is still using Jeremiah as a Prophet to Judah, even in the Land of Egypt. The people do not realize it but God is doing them a favor by making sure they have a preacher, someone that will tell them the truth. Oh, they won't listen to him and they will hate him for it, but if not for Jeremiah these people would fully apostatize themselves with the gods and idols of Egypt.

I know it appears right now that in the country we live in that people have fully given themselves over to sin and there are a lot of false prophets out there preaching a false prosperity and social gospel, but God still has faithful men standing up declaring the truth. Can you imagine what would become of this country if all of God's faithful men were suddenly gone?

2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, 3 Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers.

The LORD, once again is reminding them of the reason for their misery. He has caused it to come upon them due to their disobedience, most specifically because of their worship of other gods. If there was one thing that was engrained on the minds of each and every Jew, it was the very first commandment:

Exodus 20:1-6: And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

It should not have come as a shock to them when everything God said would happen to them started happening. With numerous opportunities to repent and turn back to Him, you would think they would have hit their knees, repented, and sought forgiveness, but instead of doing that, they just dove in deeper and deeper into idolatry.

4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

Here is another example of the mercy God had them by sending the prophets to warn them over and over and over. But they did not listen to the prophets, instead they wanted to kill the prophets to shut them up. Much like it is in the world we live in today. Instead of repenting, the world wants to shut up the Christian. Ban the Bible, ban prayer, ban public speaking the name of Jesus, thinking if they can just silence us their problem will be solved.

There is a group of men that call themselves "**Proclaimers Of Christ Ministries**," and they stand below the building I work in on the sidewalk at the corner of Union Avenue and Gay Street, open air preaching on Friday and Saturday evenings. Sometimes they go to different areas when big events are being held and they stand and preach to the crowds. They video tape most of these and you can watch them on their Facebook page. I greatly admire these men. If you watch their videos they are often mocked and laughed at by the bar hoppers and homosexuals. It reminds me of the days of Jeremiah, proclaiming the truth but the truth falling on deaf ears. People so caught up in their sins that they are blinded to the truth.

6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.

As we see from reading this verse, there comes a point when God says enough. Just as he spoke through the Prophet Isaiah to Israel in **Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.**

My friend, you cannot continue in sin and get by with it forever. There will come a point when God will say enough.

7 Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

Not only are they sinning against God but they are bringing the repercussions of their sins upon their own souls, upon their own family. He's trying to get them to wake up and realize what they are doing. They keep looking at it as if God is being harsh and causing all of these bad things to happen to them, but the truth is, they are the ones that are causing it to happen.

It's similar to those folks sitting in prison trying to blame everyone else for their punishment. My parents made me do it, my friend made me do it, society made me do it, President Trump made me do it... It's ridiculous. Listen, we have to be accountable for our own actions. They knew better, they were warned numerous times what would happen, yet they chose to do it anyway and now they are paying the price and so are their families.

8 In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

He mentions “**the work of your hands.**” What he is referring to is the idols that they made and the offerings that they prepared in their worship of their false gods. He also mentions the “**wickedness of their wives.**” You may recall back in Lesson #7 we talked about this and how they were worshipping the “**Queen of Heaven.**” It is mentioned in **Jeremiah 7:17-18**: *Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? (18) The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.*

The Queen of Heaven is also mentioned in our text tonight in **Chapter 44:17-19**

The queen of heaven is referring to a female deity, a goddess of the moon, sky, fertility, and war. The worship of her began with Nimrod in Babel. His wife’s name was **Semiramis**, she was the queen of Babel. After God scattered Babel because of the tower they had built, the worship of Semiramis continued as **the queen of heaven**.

- The Babylonians called her **Semiramis**.
- The Assyrian’s and Chaldeans called her **Ishtar**.
- The Phoenicians called her: **Ashtoreth** and **Astarte**. (ah-star-tee)
- The Egyptians called her **Isis**.
- The Romans called her **Venus**.
- The Greeks called her **Aphrodite**.
- The Americans call her **Lady GaGa, Madonna, Katy Perry, Beyonce...**

As worship of the Queen of Heaven continued, she was considered to be the wife of the false god, **Baal**, also known as **Molech**, the fire god. Because she was the fertility goddess it caused women to worship her in hopes of having children. You can only imagine what kind of worship took place when worshipping this female fertility goddess. That is where the practice of carving and setting up **Ashera poles** in what was called **groves**. These poles were in the shape of a phallic symbol --- male genitalia. It became very popular among the Israelites living around those pagan nations.

The LORD hated this false worship. **1 Kings 14:15** For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, **because they have made their groves**, provoking the LORD to anger.

Then further down in **1 Kings 14:22-23** And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. (23) For they also built them **high places, and images, and groves**, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

We find where Josiah had commanded that all of the places built for the worship of this queen of heaven to be torn down. We also see why they were there in the first

place. Israel’s King, Solomon brought them in because of his pagan wives. **2 Kings 23:13**: *And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for **Ashtoreth** the abomination of the Zidonians, and for **Chemosh** the abomination of the Moabites, and for **Milcom** the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.*

So, this was the type of worship that was going on by these people the LORD is judging. They have no one to blame but themselves. The LORD is going to pronounce His judgment upon them in the next 4-verses:

11 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword *and* by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, *and* an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

13 For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

14 So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

That’s the sentence. Because of their sins, their idolatry, their building and worshipping false idols, and for disobeying and fleeing to Egypt, the LORD is going to cause them to die there in Egypt. Notice that he says those “**that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there.**” There will be some that will not die in Egypt that went there not of their own accord or desire, such as Jeremiah and Baruch. We see that clearly indicated down in verse **Jeremiah 44:28** *Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.*

The small number that escape would most likely be Jeremiah, Baruch, and anyone else that was forced to go there.

15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

16 *As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.*

Wow, these people are so blind. They are their own worst enemies. This is outright defiance of God. They state they will not hearken unto the words of the LORD.

17 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: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

They refuse to listen to the Word of the LORD and instead choose to listen to their own word. They seem to believe that when they were worshipping the queen of heaven that only good things happened to them.

18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

Then they state when they left off worshipping the queen of heaven then bad things started happening to them.

Listen, I have heard from several people that have made similar statements such as, "I was fine before I got saved, then I got saved and everything started happening to me."

Let me just say this:

1. If you came to Jesus and were truly saved, you were saved from your sins unto good works. That's what the Bible says. It does not say you were saved to live an easy life or a trouble free life.
2. If when you came to Jesus you were in the middle of a sin-filled life and you brought the consequences of that sin along with you, you will still have to deal with it. Such as, if you were taking drugs and you were arrested and out on bond and you got saved, you will still have to go to court and face the judge for the crimes you committed before you were saved.
3. If you made a profession of faith and expected to never be tempted or drawn to the sins you committed before you were saved, you are in for a wakeup call. Yes, you have been made a new creature in Christ but you still must battle the old man that lives inside of you as well. The old man is defeated by a daily consistent walk with the LORD Jesus Christ. The LORD helps us through the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us.

The inhabitants of Judah never truly repented and turned to the LORD. Down in their heart they were still clinging to the idolatry and evil worship that they loved so much.

19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

This is obviously the women speaking to Jeremiah. They are telling Jeremiah that he needs to take this up with their husbands because they didn't have a problem with their worship of the queen of heaven when they were doing it, so take it up with them.

20 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,

21 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?

Jeremiah reminds them that their forefathers that they stated did these things, that the LORD punished them for it. They seem to have forgotten that.

22 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.

23 Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

These things were not happening to them because they had given up their idolatry for a little while, it was happening because the LORD was punishing them for it.

24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt:

25 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

26 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.

Because of their open defiance and insistence on doing whatever they want to do, the LORD finally says enough and he will no more be their God. What a horrible thing to hear. Can you imagine the God of Heaven telling the United States of America, "I will no longer be your God."

27 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.

Instead of being the God that watches over them to do good things for them, to protect them and bless them, he will no be the God that watches for ways to bring evil upon them. They will die in Egypt in their sin and rebellion without a God.

28 Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.

These that "escape" are the ones that we mentioned earlier; people such as Jeremiah, Baruch, and others that were forced to go to Egypt against their will.

29 And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:

30 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

History tells us that the Assyrians, Ammonites, and Moabites invaded Egypt about 4 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and killed the Pharaoh. It was an easy thing for Nebuchadnezzar to then enter into Egypt and take it.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible