

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH
XVIII. Jeremiah's Stand Before Idolatrous Hebrews In Egypt
(Jeremiah 44:1-30)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to prophesy in Judah during its apostasy until God's judgment fell on the nation.
- B. Jeremiah's ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our era of spiritual decline. Such a calling can be marked by political opposition that seeks to cause God's servants to cease being able to do His work.
- C. Jeremiah 44:1-30 reports on godly Jeremiah's stand before idolatrous Hebrews after they had disobeyed God by forcing him to go with them into Egypt, and it offers a lesson for our insight, application and edification:

II. Jeremiah's Stand Before Idolatrous Hebrews In Egypt, Jeremiah 44:1-30.

- A. Though God's will had been for the surviving Hebrews to stay in the land of Judah after Babylon's invasion, they had rejected God's message through Jeremiah to stay there and had even forcibly taken Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch with them and fled into Egypt, Jeremiah 42:7-43:7.
- B. Consequently, God had Jeremiah predict that the king of Babylon whom these Hebrews had feared were they to have stayed in Israel would actually invade Egypt to where they had fled from him, and death by the sword, famine and disease that they had dreaded would face them there in Egypt, Jeremiah 43:8-13.
- C. One might think that such news from a prophet whose predictions on Babylon's invasion of Israel had come to pass, what verified him to be a true prophet, might make these Hebrews in Egypt repent. However, these Hebrews had again turned to idolatry after they had gone into Egypt, Jeremiah 44:8.
- D. Accordingly, God had Jeremiah warn these Hebrews with the same message he had given them back in Israel before the Babylonian invasion, that they needed turn from their false gods to avoid judgment, Jer. 44:1-10,
- E. This hardness of heart brought another pronouncement of judgment: the remnant who had gone into Egypt would fall there just as God had punished Judah in Israel, Jer. 44:11-13. Only a few survivors would return to dwell in Judah after Babylon's invasion of Egypt, Jeremiah 44:14.
- F. The people only scornfully opposed this latest message from God's proven prophet, Jeremiah 44:15-19:
 - 1. All of the Hebrew men who knew their wives had burned incense to other gods and the Hebrew women replied that they would **not** heed the word Jeremiah had spoken to them in the Lord's name, Jer. 44:15-16.
 - 2. Rather, they would do what they said they would do – burn incense to the “Queen of Heaven,” the “Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar” whose title was later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and applied to Mary, the mother of Jesus! (Jeremiah 44:17; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jer. 7:18; Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, 1978, p. 134)
 - 3. The Hebrew women added that their failure to keep worshiping the Queen of Heaven had been the cause for Babylon's invasion of Israel, and that their husbands had allowed them to worship her, Jer. 44:18-19.
- G. Jeremiah rebutted this argument, stating that their burning of incense and worship of false gods had led to God's judgment in fulfillment of the Law that had **long** prohibited them from doing such sins, Jer. 44:20-23. The **short-term precedent** the women had used about their temporarily ceasing to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven was **invalidated** by the **long-term precedent of God's Word** through **Moses of antiquity!**
- H. Jeremiah then stated that Israel's God said to go ahead and continue their idol worship but know that none of them would again invoke God's name, saying, “As surely as the Sovereign Lord lives,” for God was watching over them for harm and not good, that they would perish with Babylon's invasion of Egypt so that the few survivors would know whose word would stand as true— their word or God's Word, Jeremiah 44:24-28 NIV.
- I. In addition, to certify this prophecy as being true, God through Jeremiah declared that their current ruler, Pharaoh Hophra, would be given into the hand of his enemies who wanted to kill him just as these Hebrews' former Judaeen king Zedekiah had been given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, Jeremiah 44:29-30. Historically, this Pharaoh “was slain in a revolt led by Ahmose in 569” B. C. (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Jeremiah 44:30)

Lesson: *The unbelieving Hebrews who fled from Judah into Egypt then deceived themselves into sanctioning their practice of idolatry in Egypt. Thus, God had Jeremiah repeat his initial message to them back in Judah about turning from idols. However, they still did not repent, so they were doomed to face Babylon all over again!*

Application: *(1) We can avoid being deceived and deceiving ourselves by heeding the long-term view of history provided in Scripture as opposed to short-term “precedents”! (2) God always takes the long-term view of history, maintaining His ancient views on sin and righteousness, so we best align with His long-term views for blessing!*