

# **Exposition of Jeremiah - Lesson 44**

## ***"Apostasy Begins With Man's Rejection of Established Order"***

By:

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**Applicational Text: Genesis 3:17** *Because thou hasten unto the voice of thy wife and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake;...*

**Expositional Text: Jeremiah 44:19** *Then the women said, when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make cakes to worship her, without our men?*

### **Introduction:**

You might call this forty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah ***"God's indictment and obituary to the remnant of Judah that had fled to Egypt."*** But, in this indictment, we see a pattern as old as humanity. When God's Word is ignored the roles God assigned for society to function properly are rejected. This was evident in the garden of Eden and is repeatedly seen in the history of mankind. It is seen here in the disobedience of the Children of Israel to God's command for them to remain in the Judah.

When the remnant of Jews had heard God's command that they were not to go to Egypt, they went anyway. And this forty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah is the Lord's indictment and obituary because of their rebellion, but it also reveals the breakdown in their society that resulted in their rebellion. There is a significant revelation here that we may read over without picking up on it – that revelation is the role reversal that is as old as the account of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. When men fail to serve in their divinely appointed roles women are quick to step into that role.

As you read through our study passage in Jeremiah chapter forty-four, you may notice a reference to the women that had not been noted before in Jeremiah. It may not be obvious to the casual reader, but this message of Jeremiah focuses on the influence of the women in the rejection of God that precipitated the Fifth Cycle of Discipline the Jews were experiencing.

God has established divine institutions and roles of authority to promote order in society; the Divine Institution of Volition with God in authority, the Divine Institution of Marriage with the man in authority, the Divine Institution of Family with Fathers and Mothers in authority, the Divine Institution of Government with Law in authority, and the Divine Institution of The

Church with Christ in authority. God created the man to have dominion over the earth and created the woman to help him. When we ignore the structure of authority God established society goes haywire.

Let's look at how sin originated in the Garden. God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told them the day they ate of that tree, dying instantly (spiritual death) they would eventually die (physical death).

But that was not the first command they were given. The Genesis account says that God commanded them to *"...be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, to have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."* (Genesis 1:28). *And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to dress it and keep it.* (Genesis 2:15). We tend to think that the first command was to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That was not the first commandment but the first commandment that identified a consequence of violating it. Had Adam obeyed the first commandments perhaps He would have never eaten from the forbidden tree, he failed to "keep it," The Hebrew word *"shaw-mar"* means **to guard** the garden. Adam failed to guard the garden and maintain dominion over the creatures, as a result he became subject to Satan, the serpent.

Listen again to the indictment the Lord issues to Adam, *"...Because thou has hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."* (Genesis 3:17)

It wasn't just that Adam ate the fruit, but that his action was initiated by the fact that he *"...hearkened to the voice of his wife. And ate of the tree..."* The word *"hearkened"* is from the Qal (perfect) second person, masculine singular of the Hebrew word *"shaw-mah."* It means to hear with understanding and obedience. The fall of man was initiated by a role reversal—Adam became submissive to his wife—and that same role reversal is emphasized in the forty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah in which it is revealed that the wives initiated idolatry in Judah and after arriving in Egypt.

It must be noted that the idolatry emphasized in the text is the worship of the Queen of Heaven. So, not only is there a change of roles in the initiators of this idolatry, but the idolatry is a departure from the worship of Father God, to embrace the idea that God is a woman.

If you reject the established order you will also reject the God who established that order.

Let's look at it...

## I. A Word From The Lord In The Land of Egypt:

**Jeremiah 44:1-6** *<sup>1</sup>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, <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. <sup>6</sup> 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.

The Lord reminds that they were eyewitness to what He had done in Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah. The Lord said that the desolation was so severe that “...no man dwelleth therein...”

You might recall, that when Adam hearkened to the voice of his wife and ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which God told him not to eat of, “...Therefore the Lord God sent him forth out of the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man: and He placed Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.”

Sin has consequences as the Lord explained in verse three, *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.*

Like with Adam in the garden, God had warned Israel that sin had consequences, the Lord reminds “...<sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup> But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. <sup>6</sup> 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.

## II. Questions That Demand an Answer:

Jeremiah 44:7-10 <sup>7</sup> 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; <sup>8</sup> 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? <sup>9</sup> 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?

*<sup>10</sup> 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.*

**God asks several questions:**

- Why have you committed this evil that has resulted in there being no remnant in the land?
- Why have you provoked me with your idolatry when you were in your land and even now while you are in Egypt?
- Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the kings of Judah, and their wives?
- Have you forgotten your own wickedness and that of your wives?

**The Indictment:**

- Your wives committed this wickedness while in Judah and now in Egypt and have not been humbled, nor do they have a reverential awe for me or walk in my law nor by my statutes that I set before you and your fathers.

### **III. Therefore Saith The Lord of Hosts – The God of Israel:**

*<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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: <sup>14</sup> 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.*

Because you have committed this evil of idolatry and have provoked me and have forgotten the sins of your fathers and even your own this is what I am going to do:

- Set my face against you for evil
- Cut off all Judah
- Consume the remnant by the sword and by famine
- They shall be an execration and an astonishment
- They shall be a curse and a reproach
- Only a few who desire to return to Judah will escape

## IV. The Men Reject God and Support Their Wives in Idolatry:

Having heard this indictment and the resulting consequences, the majority of the remnant proclaim the steadfastness of their commitment to the vows they have made to the worship of the Queen of Heaven

**Jeremiah 44:15-19** <sup>15</sup> *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,* <sup>16</sup> *As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.* <sup>17</sup> *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.* <sup>18</sup> *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.* <sup>19</sup> *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?*

These are the same men that asked Jeremiah to pray to his God, their God, about going to Egypt. The same men who pledged to do all that their God said to do (**Jeremiah 42:5-6**). They had refused to be faithful to that pledge, but here affirm that they have made a commitment to the “Queen of Heaven and they were going to be faithful to their commitment, *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.* (**Jeremiah 44:17**) Their wives had initiated this thing, but they committed themselves to supporting them. “...all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods...” committed themselves to fulfilling their vows, *we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth.*”

They reasoned they had plenty of “*victuals*” (food and clothing) when they and their fathers, and kings, and princes were worshiping the “Queen of Heaven.” They said, “*We were well, and saw no evil.*” I suppose they had missed our studies on “The angelic Conflict” and were not aware that Satan is the “god of this world system” (II Corinthians 4:4) and that he does provide material comforts to those who align with his agenda. However, it is more probable that they had short memories of the many deliverances and blessings God had provided for them, beginning with the call of Abraham and the deliverance of Moses.

## V. The Omniscient God Knows and Has Grown Weary:

**Jeremiah 44:20-23** <sup>20</sup> *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,* <sup>21</sup> *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?* <sup>22</sup> *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.* <sup>23</sup> *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.*

So which came first, the chicken or the egg? No! That question is not in the text, but Jeremiah addresses the issue, which came first, their idolatry or the judgment of God? The prophet interrogates them, *“When you were burning incense to the “Queen of Heaven” in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, do you think the Lord did not remember or that it never came to His mind?”*

It was only when God could not bear it any longer that He turned the land into *a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant...* The chicken came first, then the egg, likewise the idolatry came first then *“...this evil is happened unto you...”*

## VI. It Started with The Exchange of Roles:

It started back in Judah; the women turned to idolatry. It was a feminist movement! They abandoned Father God the Creator of heaven and earth and designed their own religion – it was built around the elevation of woman above the man and led to a woman’s liberation movement. Remember! It began in the Garden of Eden when Adam hearkened to the voice of his wife. Rejection of God’s structure for order in society has manifested itself throughout the history of the world. In some cultures it was promoted in various forms of religion – idolatry. In a more sophisticated society like ours it is promoted as equality. However it never remains a matter of equality but always results in role reversal. We see it here in Jeremiah and we are seeing it in our own culture today. The woman was designed as a responder and man was designed as the initiator. We are structured that way by our Creator, body, soul and spirit. Because of our divinely designed structure we are unfitted for reverse roles. It always leads to further sin and that is followed by discipline and judgment.

**Jeremiah 44:24-25** <sup>24</sup> *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:* <sup>25</sup> *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.*

The Children of Israel had repeatedly broken their vows to God, but they had been emphatic in maintaining their vows to the “Queen of Heaven” and other forms of idolatry to which they had committed themselves. Had they been that devoted to the true and living God they would have remained in their own land to maintain it during this time of national discipline. Jeremiah affirms that they will “...*surely perform your vows.*” If we were as faithful to the Lord as we are to our own ideals and objectives there would be a noticeable difference in our own neighborhoods. How tragic that the men of Israel were more committed to their wives and their view of religion than to Moses, and the prophets. How tragic that they were more devoted to burning incense and baking cakes in the shape of human genitalia for their swinger parties than they were in attempting to understand the ritual of the Law and the message of the coming Messiah. But then, it began with the men hearkening to the voice of their wives.

It is easy for us to confuse the distinction of roles with the value of the individual. Many are offended at Paul’s statement in I Timothy 2:12 “*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*” The offense comes when the reader fails to read all the passage and does not understand the reason given. I Timothy 2:13-14 adds, <sup>13</sup> *For Adam was first formed, then Eve.* <sup>14</sup> *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

Adam was first formed then Eve was formed to be a help that fit him. Man was designed as an initiator and the woman was designed as a responder. The Apostle Paul tells us that the woman’s basic design as a responder makes her vulnerable to deception. That is why she is not to teach men and that’s the very reason she is prone to initiate idolatry. The woman’s design as a responder is not to be seen as all negative, but the design must be understood and followed if a society is to function as God designed. Let the woman be in control and throw in a sex orgy or two and the men will follow.

## VI. God Removed His Name From Among The Gods

Things with the Children of Israel had deteriorated to the extent that their rejection of God had reached the point where rejected them.

**Jeremiah 44:26** *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.*

There does come a time in God’s dealings with His people when He has had enough and it is too late to turn back. It happened in the days of Noah, It happened with Israel and it will happen again. Bible prophecy reveals a lake of fire and brimstone and if you doubt its authenticity re-read this chapter of the Book of Jeremiah.

Proverbs 1:28-31 says <sup>28</sup> *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:* <sup>29</sup> *For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:* <sup>30</sup> *They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.*

God continues His withdrawal from the Children of Israel...

Jeremiah 44:27-28 <sup>27</sup> *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.* <sup>28</sup> *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 their's.*

They had been determined to go to Egypt and embrace the Egyptian Gods, so the Lord cuts them off and they will die down in Egypt – all but a small repentant remnant “*Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah.*”

## Conclusion:

Jeremiah 44:29-30 <sup>29</sup> *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:* <sup>30</sup> *Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh hophra 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.*

No doubt there were some of that small number of repentants who were attempting to hitch a ride with Nebuchadnezzar's troops when they God handed Pharaoh hophra over to Neuchadnezzar for the trip to Babylon – I can hear them now, ***Just drop us off at The Habitation of Chimham just outside Bethlehem. Please!***

## But it all begins at Salvation:

- *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*
- *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...*
- *With the heart man believes unto righteousness...*
- *But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...*
- *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved..*

*Let Us Learn From The Failure of Others and Avoid*

*The Pain, Loss, or Suffering of*

*Personal Discipline!*