

Jeremiah 44:15-19, 25-28 Don't Worship The Goddess Falls Ch. AM 2/26/2023

Remember that the book of Jeremiah is not arranged or organized according to a timeline of what happened first, second, third and last, but rather the book is organized according to topics and themes.

As a result, chapter 44 is not the end of the book, but it is chronologically the last words of Jeremiah. This last encounter between Jeremiah and the people who ran away into Egypt took place months after they arrived in Egypt, and the people were now settled in places far apart and across the country.

Perhaps the people had traveled to meet together at a festival, because now Jeremiah has this last opportunity to speak to them. So, we look at chapter 44:1, *“The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros...”*

What did Jeremiah say to them?

Verse 2 – you saw the destruction of Jerusalem

Verse 3 – why did God destroy it? The people worshipped other gods!

Verse 4 – God send many prophets to warn the people about idolatry.

Verse 5 – but the people did not listen. They kept on making offerings to other gods.

Verse 6 – So God destroyed Jerusalem.

Verses 7-14 – God showed that the remnant of His people now living in Egypt are committing the same sin of idolatry, and they will face the same result of destruction. That brings us to the main point of today's sermon, which begins in verse 15... **The LORD cautions us against the deadly allure of idolatry, symbolized by the goddess ‘the queen of heaven,’ and God rescues us through Christ The King.**

1. Idolatry requires believing two lies: a) the queen brings only harmless goodies, b) The King brings only burdens and trouble. (v.15-18)

This passage reveals the answer of the people to God. God warned them about idolatry, and verse 15 the people answer. The people knew that they were caught up in making offerings to other gods. But verse 16, they said, we will not listen to God's warning! Verse 17, they will be loyal to their own vows to the Queen of heaven. Who is that? The queen was the center of a false religion. It was just another way to turn from The LORD God. It was like a folk religion. It was superstitions and services to honor perhaps the moon or the planet Venus, or a goddess named Ishtar, or Ashtoreth, or Astarte. They would worship this queen of heaven by making cakes in the shape of figurines. It was an unusually strong superstition, and it included whole families. We saw this back in chapter 7, where Jeremiah addressed this back in Jerusalem, in his famous Temple sermon. Listen to Jeremiah 7:18, *“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink*

offerings to other gods...” It was a family barbeque, but not to serve the Christian god. Instead, to serve some other local religion.

Now come back to Jeremiah 44, and look at verse 17. The people believed that in those days, everything was good. The people believed that it was innocent. The people believed that it was Jeremiah who ruined everything, by forcing them to give up the worship of the queen of heaven. Listen to it from Jeremiah 44:16-17, *“As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you. 17 But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster.”*

Lie number one. The worship of the queen of heaven is innocent, because she only brings us harmless goodies. What are the goodies? Plenty of food, prosperity, and no disaster! That is all the people wanted. They did not want Jeremiah to make a federal case out of it. It was no big deal.

What ruined it?

Lie number two. God ruined it, in partnership with His prophet Jeremiah!

Listen to verse 18, *“But since we left off making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.”*

This is the second lie of idolatry. The required lie is that being loyal to God and pure in our worship to God alone is the recipe that brings lack of food, lack of financial prosperity and the good life, and actually brings disaster! Idolatry trains our minds to believe that God brings us only burdens and troubles. That is a lie.

They actually blamed the entire fall of Jerusalem on ceasing to make cakes to the queen of heaven! It was all Jeremiah’s fault! So this time, now down in Egypt, they had no intention of making the same mistake again. They were not going to listen to Jeremiah. They were not intending to change based on God’s commands. Rather, they were going to continue to offer false worship of shapely cakes to the false queen of heaven, their goddess that they chose instead of God.

They were turning the truth upside down.

Romans 1:21, *“...for although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”*

Jeremiah warned about serving other gods, and it was in His last speech. Moses warned about serving other gods, and it was the first of the 10 commandments. Paul warned about serving other gods, and it was in the first chapter of Romans. And the apostle John warned about serving other gods. What was the lasting impression from the Apostle John in his first letter? The last thing John wrote? 1 John 5:21, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”

2. Many people are disarmed by mass public approval of idolatry, but it is still a deadly trap. (v.19, 25)

How did so many people fall into these lies? Verse 19, the women said that they offered cakes and drinks to the queen of heaven, made in the image of her, that they had the approval of their husbands. Husbands, wives, children, families, communities. How could so many people fall into these lies?

Verse 25, “*We will surely perform our vows that we have made, to make offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her.*” How did the crowds of people become so committed to lies that they made vows and were loyal to their vows to the queen of heaven, to make her cakes, and drinks?

Public approval. Everyone is doing it.

But Moses, Jeremiah, and later Jesus, Paul, John were all saying that public approval does not make it right. God tells us the truth. God tells us what is right and wrong. God alone is to be honored and praised.

God tells us that idolatry is not innocent, but rather is a deadly trap.

One of the special strengths of idolatry is the broad appeal. Idolatry gets husbands and wives involved together. Idolatry gets children involved. The children get trained what part they play and what words to say.

Idolatry takes the place of God, and bumps God out of the way.

Idolatry takes persons, marriages, families and communities, and entraps them. Idolatry makes all of those people believe that it is innocent, and that God is the problem. They believe the lie that god is the killjoy, and those who preach God’s Word are the problem. If the Christian church would just relax and tamp down, then we could peacefully coexist with our idolatry and God.

Why cannot God share worship? Why does God have to hog all the worship? The lie goes like this – if you look at the lives of the people who are pure and devoted to the worship of God, and Him alone, those lives are the ones that are filled with suffering, burdens, and troubles!

Christians suffer. Why not follow the queen of heaven? It is rather pleasant over here. We have good food and family times. We have peace and prosperity. We have no disasters befall us

We agree about a few things. 1) God demands exclusive worship. 2) God calls His people to suffer.

But they are wrong about a few things. 1) Worshipping a goddess is not innocent. 2) it is not peace and prosperity for very long. 3) when God's people suffer, God promises to never leave them and to never forsake them. 4) the downfall of Jerusalem was caused by the sin of idolatry and other sins. 5) God's King is the one to be worshipped, for God's king is the one who came to save us.

3. Idolatry presents as innocent and harmless, but in the end is revealed as a very wicked and lethal choice. (v.26-28)

Verse 26 – the people who desire to have God in one hand and idols in the other hand, forfeit the right to call on the name of the LORD.

Verse 27 – God instead of being the one who will watch over you for good and protection, becomes the God who brings disaster. That is truth. The lie was exactly the reverse of the truth.

Verse 28 – in the end, we will all know and we will all observe what theory of reality proves to be the true one. God's Word, or the lies of worshippers of other gods. Either God' Word is true or it is not. One day, everyone will see the answer. Everyone in Egypt, everyone in Jerusalem, everyone who went to Egypt and came back to Jerusalem. Everyone in the days of Moses. Everyone in the days of Jeremiah. Everyone in the days of Jesus. Everyone in the days of the apostles Paul and John. Everyone throughout church history. Everyone in the world today. Everyone in this room, and everyone listening to this message live or recorded. You will know the truth in the end.

You know the truth right now. Idolatry is presenting to you a lie of innocence and harmlessness. But it is guilt and destruction. It is wicked and lethal.

Idolatry is a dangerous and lethal problem for us spiritually.

Idolatry is spiritual suicide.

Idolatry was drinking water from another cistern, such as Jeremiah said in chapter 2. Idols are nothing more than scarecrows in a cucumber field, as Jeremiah said in chapter 10. Idolatry is truly dangerous, as Jeremiah showed here in chapter 44.

Goddess worship is a very great sin.

The Jews who ran away to Egypt loved to worship their goddess!

They would rather worship their goddess, the false queen of heaven, than the true King of the Universe.

Where do we see idolatry today?

Archaeologists have uncovered in the ancient kitchens, actual baking molds used to shape the goddess into sweet little cakes.

In the future, what will archaeologists find about our country?

1) Future archaeologists will find a lot of statues to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was a good and godly believer, and an example to us. However, worshipping Mary is not a harmless addition to the Christian community.

Worshipping Mary is rank pagan idolatry. We must not pray to her as a mediator a mediatrix or a co-redemptrix. She is a sinner, saved by grace brought to us all through her son Jesus, the Son of God. Mary was one of the early Christians praising God in Acts 1:14. They were not gathered to worship Mary, but rather Christ alone. We join with Mary in praising Christ for our salvation.

2) Future archaeologists will find a lot of attention given to the goddess Sophia. It is the Greek word for Wisdom. Radical feminist theologians twist the Bible to encourage idol worship of this goddess. For 3 decades, some runaway churches have sung praises to Sophia, writing new hymns, and even inventing unholy sacraments to her. This is the worship of a female god, which goes against the Bible.

3) Future archaeologists will find worship of the witch-goddess Wicca. Goddess of satanic power. Witchcraft is on the rise in our country, and not just around the end of October. It is year-round. Tens of thousands of nuns have left the Catholic church for witchcraft and the occult. They have exchanged one goddess for another.

4) Future archaeologists will find the worship of the female body. Either your own body, or the body of another. The intimacy activities, and the glamor. Our ads in our websites on phones, computers and televisions and other screens, our magazines, billboards and screens have female bodies on display. Sports events have female bodies on display on the sidelines. There is a lot of talk about it being innocent and harmless goodies. The money put into shoes, clothes, makeup, perfume, jewels and accessories shows an attention at the level of national worship. Shopping is big, because Glamor is our Queen. Fashion. Beauty. We make cakes to her, and we have graduated from cakes to all sorts of other images of her. We worship her, as a society, and the future archaeologists will show this truth.

What is your idol? What do you like to do that keeps you from worshipping and serving God? Are you willing to follow a God who calls you to suffer, and who promises to abide with you in your suffering?

We are all guilty of worshipping wrong gods. The warnings are needed, because we keep on gravitating toward new gods all the time.

Jesus came to gather us in true worship, but we would not gather. Matthew 23:37, “...how often would I have gathered...as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing...” Then, Jesus went to the cross and died and rose again to pay for our sins of idolatry, in order to gather us anyway. We did not want to gather, and so Jesus changed what we want, Jesus changed what we desire, our savior changed our wills, so that we desire to gather. We desire to worship God together. Jesus is the temple of Jerusalem that was destroyed in God’s wrath and judgment for our sins. Jesus is the temple of Jerusalem that was raised again on the

third day in God's grace and salvation for us. Jesus is the temple whom we worship. He is the King of heaven. We worship Him. He brings us blessing. He provides for us. He calls us to suffer, and accompanies us in our suffering by His Spirit and His Word. Following Jesus is the right choice, the only decision that brings new life from above. We are made alive together with Christ by action of God the Father. We have His promises and His presence. He enables us to keep His commands, starting with the first commandment, to have no other gods before Him.

Conclusion:

1) We daily worship God in His Word and prayer.

Every day, we wake up and we choose between worshipping the Queen or the King. The Queen of any false god, or the only true and living God, the King of Heaven.

Personal devotions and marriage worship just takes the Bible and prayer.

This is why fathers in the Reformed tradition take suppertime as an opportunity to open the Scriptures with their wives and their children and their guests. I remember the passionate prayers of my grandfather and my mother and my father around the dinner table. Children remember the songs we sing at dinnertime or at bedtime.

The runaway Jews were committed to the Queen of Heaven, while in Egypt. They made vows and kept their vows.

We need to keep our vows that we made as parents on the day of the baptism of our children. That is, to train them up in the Scriptures. To remind them of the true God on a consistent basis.

2) We bring loved ones to church to hear teaching and preaching. I used to think that it was a shame how Mother's Day, Father's Day, the Superbowl and multiple Golf championships, and even the Indianapolis 500 land on Sundays. But actually, I now see it as a God-designed a teaching opportunity. What are we demonstrating to our children on those days? Who is more important, the Queen of our clan, or the King of the Church? If you look ahead in the next 25 years, do you think there will be more or less activities on Sundays competing with church? Who says we cannot gather with family on a Saturday. Or better yet, to come to church together, and have the children see our whole clan singing praises not to any Queen, but to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Romans 10:13, "*everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*" It is not just children, but other loved ones. I remember a man in Pennsylvania, when I served a church there. His wife was not a believer. We saw her twice a year. Because when she asked him what he wanted for his birthday, he said I want you to come to worship the King with me. And when she asked him

what he wanted for Father's day, he said, I want you to come worship the King with me. So, she would come. And I had the privilege of preaching the gospel of Christ for her to hear. Be careful not to worship the Goddess. The queen of heaven does not exist. She is a lie. Call on your loved ones to worship the only God who exist - the King of heaven. 1 Timothy 1:15, to "...*the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*"