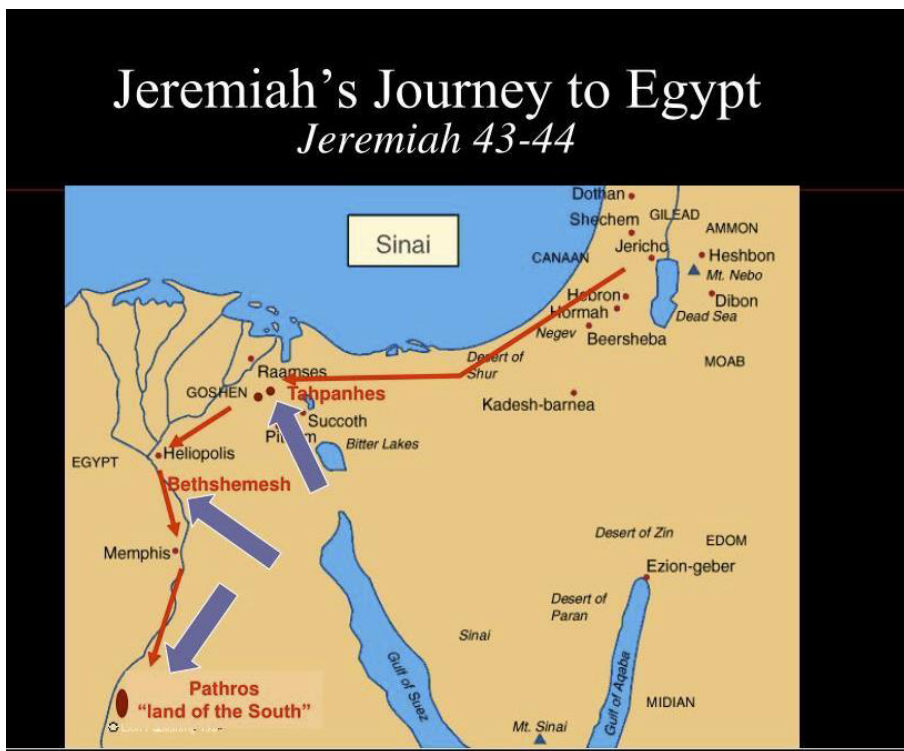


Jeremiah 44

Read Jeremiah 44:1-6: Last week we talked about how the few Jews who escaped the siege on Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity began to regather in Judah. They asked Jeremiah to pray for direction. They committed themselves in advance to follow whatever the reply God provided. They essentially made a vow to God; which they broke. We should never promise God anything...because we fail.

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of [m]old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ But let [u]your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Matthew 5)



Not only did the Jews decidedly reject God’s direction; but they broke an oath to God. This is going beyond normal sin, to a new level of antagonizing God. They *pulled his chain* and then reminded him that they were continuing to do the opposite. God is not a genie or a servant to be toyed with. That would make anyone angry.

God spent hundreds of years telling the children of Israel which way to go. They never got too excited about any of this direction. He is not your God if you do not do what he says. “No Lord” is *an oxymoron*.

God is not a tool to pick up or throw down, based on my whims. It might comfort us to have our cross hanging around our neck, but that is not the same of being a servant, a follower or a living sacrifice. We come near God in a way that we can still maintain our freedom to step away when we get the notion.

I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts; ³ A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; Who sacrifice in gardens, And burn incense on altars of brick; ⁴ Who sit among the graves, And spend the night in the tombs; Who eat swine's flesh, And the broth of ^[a]abominable things is in their vessels; ⁵ Who say, 'Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!' These ^[b]are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day. ⁶ "Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silence, but will repay— Even repay into their bosom— ⁷ Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together," Says the LORD, "Who have burned incense on the mountains And blasphemed Me on the hills; Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom." (Isaiah 65)

Clearly, words are not working. Time-outs are not working. Spankings are not working either. What do you do with people who always do the opposite of what their parents tell them to do? Paul said it well:

And you are ^[b]puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³ For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord ^[c]Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5)

God has made some difficult promises. He has a future for a faithful Israel. He also needs to deal with unbelief and disobedience now. How can you produce a future generation if the current population essentially kill themselves? God desires that all men would be saved. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. The sad reality is that God has always saved a small remnant; while letting the vast sea of unbelievers perish.

*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and *there are many who go in by it.* ¹⁴ ^[c]Because narrow is the gate and ^[d]difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7)*

The flood is a perfect example. It seems that humanity must be thinned out to a precious few who are savable. Society becomes unsustainable without God's intervention. God has already made promises to restore Israel, so he cannot destroy the last of them.

Now Judah's survivors add idolatry in Egypt to just being headstrong. These people seem suicidal. God compares the children of Israel to a prostitute who ruins her life; and then keeps getting rescued. Hosea compared his people to a hardheaded prostitute who abandoned her family for another. She had a child with the prophet as a sign. They rejected the one who truly loved them...but God will create a future for them out of the ashes of their own self-destruction.

Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. ⁹ Then God said: “Call his name ^[d]Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. ¹⁰ “Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are ^[e]not My people,’ There it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’ ¹¹ Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel! (Hosea 1)

Read Jeremiah 44:7-23: God is asking a rhetorical question. Why are you worshipping false gods? He reminded them that it got their ancestors killed. They are essentially bringing curses upon themselves. God will see to it that they are destroyed in Egypt.

Now the people turn on Jeremiah and spitefully take it to the next level. They begin by telling God that they will not do what he says. Secondly, they say that when they burn incense to their idols, they have plenty of food and supplies. When they stopped, they ran out of food and supplies. They added that when they stopped worshipping their Queen of Heaven, that the sword and famine have wiped them out. Then the women try to school Jeremiah on the proper protocol to deal with the Queen of Heaven.

Jeremiah says that your own mouths have sworn that you are choosing your Queen of Heaven over me, clearly. You will now reap what you sow. You will become poster children for this foolish act. Your Pharaoh, who you basically worship is going down. The Babylonians are on the verge of wiping him out.