

Handout: Jeremiah Lesson 20

But Yahweh's face is set against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth (Ps 34:16).

Timeline:

- 587 BC: The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and appointed Gedaliah the governor of the Babylonian Province of Judah.
- 582 BC: After the assassination of Gedaliah, the army King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded and subdued the rebel states of Syria, Ammon, Moab, and Edom; and the Babylonians invaded Egypt.
- 570 BC: Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt is murdered by his enemies.
- 568-67 BC: The army of King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt a second time, inflicting an Egyptian holocaust.

Jeremiah gives the remnant of Judaeans living in Egypt six last oracles from Yahweh in Chapters 43-44. Each oracle, after the usual short introductory phrase, begins with the words "Yahweh God of Israel (with several slight variations) says this," and the oracles are interrupted by two narratives:

- Oracle #1: Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt is coming (43:10-13).
- Oracle #2: Idol worship was the cause of Judah's destruction (44:2-6).
- Oracle #3: The remnant in Egypt will incur God's wrath due to idol worship and the rejection of God's Laws (44:7-10).
- Oracle #4: The remnant in Egypt will perish (44:11-14).

Narrative #1: Judaeans men and women respond to Jeremiah (44:15-19).

Narrative #2: Jeremiah answers the men and women (44:20-23).

- Oracle #5: God accuses the women of the Egyptian remnant of worshipping the goddess Astarte/Ishtar and withdraws His protection from the Egyptian remnant; they will die in their sins (44:25-28).
- Oracle #6: God will give the Judaeans in Egypt a "sign" of the coming final judgment: Pharaoh Hophra will be handed over to his enemies who will kill him (44:30).

44:1 ... Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph and the territory of Pathros.

Jeremiah's oracles are for all the Judaeans living throughout Egypt, and he may have traveled to these various locations to give his oracles, or they may have been present for a festival honoring Astarte/Ishtar, Queen of Heaven.

1. Migdol is a frontier town that is north and east of Tahpanhes on the coastal road from Asia into Egypt.
2. Tahpanhes is a town bordering on the Sinai in Egypt's eastern Delta on the caravan route leading into the Levant and points north. It is the town to which Johanan and the refugees came in 43:7.
3. Noph is another name for Memphis, the Old Kingdom Egyptian capital on the west bank of the Nile River that was later replaced by Thebes and at this period by Sais which is farther to the west.

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4. Pathros means “Land of the South” and refers to the territory of Upper (southern) Egypt (Lower Egypt was northern Egypt). The flow of the Nile River from the south to the north determined the designations of Upper and Lower Egypt.

In 44:17-18 the Judaeen refugees indulge in selective historical memory in claiming that their good life in Judah was due to the pagan goddess, the “Queen of Heaven.” The rebellious Exodus generation expressed the same ingratitude and selective memory:

1. On the difficult journey to Mt. Sinai, they complained that life in slavery was good in Egypt (Ex 16:2-3).
2. When they arrived at Mt. Sinai, after receiving the Ten Commandments and while Moses was on the mountain, they had the same selective memory and ingratitude when they made an idol and said it was the Golden Calf idol that liberated them from slavery in Egypt.

Is it wrong to call the Virgin Mary the Queen of Heaven? The Virgin Mary’s role and title are completely different from the Hebrew title for the pagan goddess Ishtar [Strong’s 4446]. Mary is the Gebira [Strong’s 1377], the mother of the Davidic king, Jesus Christ. And, as the queen of her son’s heavenly kingdom, it is a title she deserves. See the references to the Gebira in Jeremiah 13:18 and 29:2. See the document: The Blessed Virgin Mary: Queen Mother of the New Davidic Kingdom at <http://agapebiblestudy.com/documents/Mary%20The%20Queen%20Mother%20of%20the%20New%20Davidic%20Kingdom.htm>.

Does the Catholic practice of veneration of the Cross, statues of the Virgin Mary or saints violate the commandment against idols? See CCC 2129-2132; Ex 25:10-22; 26:1; Num 21:4-9; 1 Kng 6:23-24; 7:23-26. The prohibition against images concerns worshipping those images. However, in the Old Testament, God ordained and permitted images associated with the worship of Yahweh or that pointed to the future eternal salvation of the Christ. For example:

1. The cherubim above the Mercy-seat of the Ark of the Covenant and the huge statues of the cherubim in Solomon’s Temple.
2. The woven figures of on the textiles in the Sanctuary and later the Temple.
3. The bronze serpent that offered salvation from snake bites.

These symbolic images pointed to the salvation brought by the Word Incarnate, as Jesus mentions in John 3:14-15 concerning the image of the bronze serpent. In the same way, Catholic statues remind us of the real people who cooperated in God’s divine plan for the salvation of humanity. The honor given to an image passes to its prototype, and therefore the veneration of an image venerates the person portrayed in it. It is respectful veneration and not the adoration that is due to God alone (CCC 2132; Council of Nicaea II; Council of Trent; Vatican Council II). If it is wrong to have artistic images to represent these people in our covenant family and to remind us of their dedicated to God and their love for Christ to inspire us, it would also be wrong to have pictures/images of our family members and other loved ones.

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