

## September 17

**Scriptures:** Read Jeremiah 43, 44 & 45

**Key Verse:** “I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!’“ (Jeremiah 44:4)

### Overview

Chapter 43 is a continuation of the events in the preceding few chapters. Just as Jeremiah had discerned, the people were indeed hypocritical and full of lies and stubbornness against God, for when Jeremiah declared the word from God, saying that they must stay in the land of Judah, they defiantly refused (43:2). Not only did they despise and reject the word from God, but they also rejected Jeremiah as a true prophet of God, even though they saw the actual fulfillment of Jeremiah’s previous prophecies. They were so hardened of heart and blinded to spiritual truth that they turned a deaf ear to the words of life.

The people accused Jeremiah of receiving instructions from Baruch, the scribe who had recorded all of Jeremiah’s prophecies (43:3). The apocryphal book which bears his name indicates that he was in Babylon at the time of Jerusalem’s fall; this is probable, for there is no mention of him since the days of Jehoiakim (36:32). The fact that the people would make such an accusation indicates that Baruch had likely been promoted to a higher position in Babylon and that he had gained favour with Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah’s message to Baruch, which appear to be their parting words (chapter 45) which was given many years earlier (compare 45:17 36:1), indicates that Baruch may have had aspirations of greatness for himself and that he had intentions to leave Judah. Yet the Lord promised him that wherever he went he would be protected and that he would not die when God brought adversity on all the people (45:5). With the sudden reappearance of Baruch after the destruction of Jerusalem, it is likely that he returned to check on the condition of his friend Jeremiah. Although we are not told whether or not Jeremiah and Baruch were forced to go with the remnant against their will to Egypt, it seems quite possible, for the people’s accusations shows their fear that Baruch may have been a spy for the Babylonians (43:3).

When the refugees reached Egypt, the Lord once again graciously sent His word of warning, giving them yet another chance to repent and return to Judah before the coming judgment. With the dramatic and symbolic demonstration of burying the stones, Jeremiah reinforced his message; it was that the king of Babylon would erect his throne over Egypt, and the suffering the Jews sought to escape in Judah would overtake them there. The king of Babylon would carry away the idols of Egypt as trophies of his victory and would plunder Egypt till he covered himself with their wealth like a garment (43:12-13).

In chapter 44 we read of the last recorded message of Jeremiah given to the disobedient, unfaithful remnant of Judah in Egypt, after they had settled in Egypt and adopted the Egyptians’ forms of idolatry. They had also reinstated the worship of the queen of heaven. This was a fertility cult like that of Artemis in Greece, and it seems that mostly the women, with the consent of their husbands, were the ones practicing this abomination. Jeremiah declared that this form of

idolatry was a major reason for God's wrath upon Judah and the resulting destruction of Jerusalem (44:2-3; cf. 7:18-20; 19:4,13, 15).

Their scornful rebuttal to Jeremiah and blatant words of trust in the queen of heaven is characteristic of the type of people to whom Jeremiah had unsuccessfully preached over so many years. It is clear how deep in sin and how deceived they had been by Satan, especially in the women's arrogant confession that any blessings they received came because of their worship to this goddess; they even blamed the calamity upon Jerusalem as being from the wrath of this goddess, because they no longer worshipped her during the reformation of Josiah (44:17-18). Jeremiah was quick to refute their words by proclaiming the truth and expressed the inevitability of their coming destruction. They would no longer use the Holy Name of the Lord hypocritically, nor swear by Him (44:26), for sadly, they would all perish, as did the evil and faithless inhabitants of Jerusalem. Even after everything God had done in Jerusalem to chastise them, they stubbornly continued to disobey. Now they would surely suffer punishment with only a few escaping to bear witness, as a sign, to the fulfillment of Jeremiah's words (44:14, 28-29).

### **Prayer**

Search our hearts, oh Lord, and reveal to us areas unpleasing to You. Father, give us the courage to submit our wills to Your perfect Will.