

**Jeremiah 44: 1-30; “Why God Hates False Worship”, Sermon # 51 in the series –  
Heart Lessons Learned by a Prophet and the People of God, Delivered  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We are living in a country where religious liberty exists and where people are free to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. We live in a country where some people worship the true and living God, and where some people say that they worship the true God, and yet they do not actually worship Him according to truth. They may say that they are Christians, but for them, what constitutes their worship, is a matter of their personal preferences. Here at our church, we are concerned to be true Christians, and so we must always remember that true religion and the worship of the only true and living God, are not matters of our own personal preferences or our own definitions of what is true. It is a matter of whether you believe what God has declared about Himself is true, in His word the Bible. There is only one true and living God and He has defined everything that He has wanted to have declared about Himself in His word. And we know that He has sent His only-begotten Son into the world, to declare Himself; to reveal Himself to our fallen sinful race of mankind, so that we might be saved.

So let me begin by saying that if you would be faithful to God, you must believe and declare this truth to others: that there is only one God, and that there is only one way to know this infinitely great and holy God. It is found by receiving His word and having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Since this is the case, I believe that we can draw this further conclusion from this chapter of Scripture and indeed from the whole Bible; that God hates the practice of all false worship. He hates it, and yet, He also expressed a deep longing that people would turn away from what is false and turn back to Him. In verse 4 God says – “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!’” So let me give you 4 reasons that God hates false worship.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Because false worship is provoking to God.** (verses 1-9)

False worship is not a matter of indifference to God. Many people act as though it is a matter of indifference to Him, when actually it has very great consequences. I think that we rarely stop to think that all religions of the world besides true Christianity are forms of idolatry. And what is idolatry? It is the worship of a false god; some other supposedly great being, or some created thing, besides God, which really does not exist, nor have any life, or power to give life, or the ability to declare himself to be God. False worship is the practice of a person’s defining for themselves who or what is to be worshiped, and how that worship is to be conducted, without consulting God’s word and God’s will in the matter. It is actually a form of radical disobedience; despising or neglecting what God has said about Himself and what He expects of you, in His word the Bible. You go along with what someone else has said that God is really like, who He really is, or what He expects of you, and you do not consult the Scriptures, or see them as God’s authoritative word in this all important matter.

The assertions and doctrines about God which are received and believed by them, may have been thought up by that person themselves, or they may have been made up by other people that they know, or some other defined religion of the world such as Buddhism or Islam. It could be an form of Christianity such as Roman Catholicism or Mormonism, but all false worship is something that God hates because their false assumptions and preconceptions keeps them from seeing what God is really like, and it keeps them from knowing Him as He really is. And that is why God hates it. If you are a true Christian, you should know, and attempt to share the truth of the Bible with other people around you. The Bible is God’s book. In it we are told that God is

the Judge of all men. He does judge them according to what they believe about Him and how they worship Him.

In our text in verses 1-4, it says that God, through Jeremiah, was addressing all the Jews who dwelt in the land of Egypt. He addressed those who dwelt at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and the country of Pathros. And he said to them – “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah; and behold this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, 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 did not know, they nor you nor your fathers.” It was their idolatry, their false worship, that brought calamity on those people. They provoked God to anger by doing it. And so, in our minds, we should not make up other reasons why a nation falls under God’s judgment, than this. A nation falls under His judgment, and God brings calamity upon it, when a people depart from worshipping Him, and they practice false worship.

God hates false religions of every kind, because it is in the mind of sinful and rebellious mankind, everywhere, apart from Christ, to worship according to their own thoughts, rather than according to God’s declared words, and His thoughts. Some people will even go farther than this and they will make physical representations of God, or images of what they think that He looks like, when God is spirit, and cannot be seen. No one has seen God at any time, it says in John 1: 18. But the only begotten Son, the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father has declared Him. So we should understand that the work of any man’s hands to promote this false god that they will worship, will most certainly provoke God to bring judgment upon them.

God, you should know is impassible. He cannot actually be provoked by anything that men do, in one sense; that is, that He is too great a Being to be affected by anything that men do. But we should understand that in another sense, in the sense that we understand things as men do, He can be provoked by the things that we do. He is most really provoked when He looks at men and sees their idolatrous worship. He then sends His servants to confront the erring and sinning nation, the erring or sinning Christian, or professed believer, and He declares to them that He is provoked by their believing a lie about Himself. His judgments upon a nation, or upon particular people, are always under His absolutely perfect self-control, in accordance with His great and eternal purposes.

What is at stake in our worship of God is His glory, and the establishment of His glory to the minds of all men. And so, He sends His messengers; in the Old Testament times He sent His prophets, in the New Testament times He sent His apostles first, in the early Church, and then on down through all the generations, He has sent pastors, preachers, and teachers. All down through this Church age, He has sent His own men to declare to all men the way of salvation and how He may truly be worshiped. If we worship what is false, God expects repentance, and He will get it, or earthly judgements of various sorts will come the nation that promotes it and the people that participate in it. If a person goes all their life worshipping a false conception of God, promoting false doctrine and practice in whatever context that they are in, they will perish in their sins if they do not repent and come to Jesus Christ. In Jeremiah’s day they needed to repent and believe in God’s promise of the Christ who come in the fullness of time.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 10 commandments says that you shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” “For I the Lord your God, am a jealous God...” Can our God really have feelings of jealousy? Well, not as a man, He cannot. But as the perfect God does have Holy affections within Him which are never provoked within Himself based upon what any man does. But they do exist within His great Being in an eternal and unchangeable sense. He is indignant that men whom He has created would ever do such a thing as worship another god. And within His great Being there is this eternal

unchangeable indignation and anger against it which He then, is well able to apply, in time and space, in the form of judgments, which God sees as righteous and necessary.

We need to have God's perspective on this, and not simply say that it doesn't matter to God whether He is worshiped, or how He is worshiped. No, we should not say that God is above all that, and He is not really provoked. No, He most certainly is really provoked, and He is jealous in this sense that I have just described, without doing any violence to His impassibility; that is, that He is without passions. In our text, His own Old Covenant people were provoking Him to wrath and they were justifying themselves in it. They were serving other gods by burning incense to them. And so He would act. Verse 6 says – "So My fury and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day." In verse 7 God says to them – Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands, bringing incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?"

This leads me to make an application to the religion of people in our day. We should not think that the worship other gods which have been made up by men, is not provoking to God. We must not think that God will not act to deal with idolatry by bringing judgments to our land, and to those who engage in it. He will. You see, God is concerned, not only with individual people, but He is concerned with nations also. And He is most concerned with whether He, the one true and living God, is being worshiped. Turn with me over to Deuteronomy 12: 29-32. "When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?' "I also will do likewise." "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods." "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Now, we are not living in days, in this country, where people are worshiping false gods by offering their sons and their daughters to them in the fire. But we are living in days in which some people think that they can call themselves Christians, and slaughter their babies in the womb at their pleasure. I am not speaking of true Christians, but those who pretend to be, for as it says in 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 15 says – "No murderer has eternal life". And abortion is murder. Well, what are they doing, then? They are worshiping a God who they believe allows them to decide whether their baby lives or dies. They are worshiping at the idol of their own sexual pleasures and convenience. They believe in a God who supposedly accepts them in their sin; even will approve of their sin. They think that they will rid themselves of the guilt and the consequences of their sexual sins, or their rejection of what God has righteously brought to them in giving them what He would give them – the precious lives of children! They think that they can do this according to their own will and their own choice. But God will most certainly judge for this, not only them, but the nation that allows this, and promotes it!

Can we not also say that we are living in days when people who call themselves Christians are offering up incense to the Queen of heaven? I think that we can. For the Roman Catholic Church believes in the worship of the Virgin Mary, and I am quite sure that they would not mind thinking of her as the Queen of heaven, would they? They think of her as a co-equal with Christ, as a Mediatrix, alongside our Lord Jesus, her Son? And so they would tell you that if you cannot get the Lord Jesus to listen to your prayers, and to answer them favorably, then you can take your concerns to her! Ah, but my beloved brethren, this is idolatry! This is false worship! And

God is no doubt provoked by it! Mary can no more hear your prayers than any of the other saints who have died, to answer them. What I am saying is that true Christians cannot approve of these things without their helping to promote a false religion, and a false worship. And so we must ask: Will there will not be grave consequences for our nation, or other nations, if these things of false worship are not repented of? There will be, for God hates it, and therefore, so should we.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – God hates false worship because it leads to a stubborn disregard for what God says.** (verse 10 and verses 15 and 16)

God says in verse 10 – “They have not been humbled, to this day, nor have they feared; they have not walked in My law or in My statutes that I set before you and your fathers.” Verse 15 – Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: ‘As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you!’ “But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven...” Now, I hope that you will understand that the tendency of good gospel preaching, when accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to humble the heart and to cause people to fear the Lord.

When a person is humbled, they begin to see what God thinks of their sin, and they begin to ask themselves – “What must I do to be saved from my sins?” That person sees that their sin deserves punishment and they begin to think to themselves – How will I ever endure eternal punishment? Perhaps they have come across this verse in Ezekiel 22: 14 that says – “Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? And Isaiah 33: 13 says – “Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? But the Lord Jesus says something to remedy this awful prospect. He said - Blessed are those who mourn over their sins, for they shall be comforted. And even those awful verses in Ezekiel 22 go on to say in verse 15 – “I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you.” Even in the midst of judgments God would show mercy. Even after the Jews had defiled themselves in the sight of the nations, God would show them this saving mercy, and they will know that that God is the Lord.

It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone which brings the true humbling and the right kind of fear of God. It is when you see what Jesus has done for you the sinner, in His life and death and resurrection. It is when you trust in Him rather than in your own fallen view of life and what you think that worship should be. You will then come to hate false worship, even as God hates it. Psalm 34: 11 says – “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” And Proverbs 8: 13 wisdom personified says – “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” But these people hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of His counsel and they despised His rebuke. They said that they would not listen to Jeremiah at all. False religion will always be strong in doing its own will, worshipping in its own way.

The Puritans used to call this – Will worship. Will worship can be defined as “the invention and practice of ways of attempting to please God that neither reason nor revelation suggest”. “Such worship as has no other warrant or ground but the will of man.” So says John Flavel. In His works, Vol. 4, P. 523, in a footnote, he quotes another Puritan by the name of John Davenant who says – “It is true that God loves, indeed, a willing worshipper, that is, one who cheerfully and willingly does whatever God has commanded him to do; but it is true on the other hand, that He hates will-worship, that is, those services that are performed to Him for immediate worship, when as (whereas) they were not prescribed and commanded by Him for that end; because this, as it is expressed in Psalm 106, verse 39, is to go a whoring with their own inventions.” (Playing the spiritual harlot by their own deeds) True worship is listening to God’s

word and worshipping and serving Him in accordance with it. A stubborn disregard is idolatry in that a person will only hold to their own idea of how they should worship.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – God hates false worship because it leads people to false conclusions and a sinful unity.** (verses 17-22)

Verse 17 says – “But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done....for then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble.” “But since we stopped burning incense 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.” And in verse 19, the women that Jeremiah had been preaching to say this – “And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husband’s permission?” And Jeremiah answers them in verse 20 – “The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and did it not come into His mind?” “So the Lord could no longer bear it, because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed.” “Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without inhabitant..”

So, the reason that these people continued on in their false worship was because they had superstitiously connected their worship with their past provision of material blessings. This was entirely false reasoning, and it was drawing wrong conclusions, for it is always and only God who gives us food and all that we have. In Psalm 145, verses 15 and 16 it says – “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season.” “You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” And Proverbs chapter 1, verse 33 says – “Whoever listens to Me will dwell safely and will be secure, without the fear of evil.” A person will be very foolish if they attribute their earthly blessings to any other source than God; if they attribute them to the queen of heaven, or St. Joseph, or St. Patrick, or their own god who they made and which they worship.

Let us also remember that it is the Lord who causes wars to cease to the end of the earth, as it says in Psalm 46, verses 8-10 – “Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth.” “He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.” “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” But often, unbelieving people will worship their own supposed wisdom and their own reasoning. And they will even stand united as husbands and wives together in what is false. It is a terrible thing when husband and wife will justify their erroneous worship and sinful actions together when God has plainly stated in the preaching of His word, the cause of all their sorrows and the reason for their suffering so much need.

But often falsely religious people will appeal to the supposed authority and practice of the fathers. We have worshipped this way for generations. This will hold to the tradition of their fathers and the Church fathers. We have always prospered when we worship in this way, they say, when actually, they do not realize that they have been following the lead of deceiving spirits, and believing in doctrines of demons. The deception of the mind of persons like this who make up their own doctrinal truth and their own unbiblical practices is so great, that when God begins to depart from blessing them, they do not realize that He has already been patient with them for a very long time. And during that time, He gave them many good things, and He expected that His goodness and kindness would lead them to repentance of false worship.

But there comes a time when God can no longer bear it, as it says in verse 22. When God sees that a people are confident in their false conclusions, and justifying themselves in their united unbelief, then He will bring His judgments upon them. But at the same time, He

continues to plead with them not to continue to do this abominable thing that He hates! Oh, how I hope that you can see how precious a thing our pure worship is, in the sight of the Holy God! How much He delights in it. May the Lord give us grace not to depart from it, by any will-worship, or any by any innovations that we might make and bring into it, which would make His worship into a man-centered worship, more than a God-centered worship! May we see how great a privilege it is to give Him the glory due to His name, and worship Him in the beauty of holiness, all our days!

**4<sup>th</sup> – God hates false worship because He knows that if His word is rejected, our whole nation will experience His desolating judgments.** (verse 26)

“Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: ‘Behold, I have sworn by My great name,’ says 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 lives.’ “Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good.” So, I hope that you can see here, that the greatest judgment that can ever come to a people is mentioned here. It is when God watches over them for adversity. It is when God determines that His great Name will no longer be named in the mouth of any person in that nation; in this case – Judah. For it is in calling upon the name of the Lord that a person is truly saved, and truly blessed. But here we see the ultimate statement of what all sin and false religion deserves. It is not having the ability even to call upon the name of the Lord to have your prayers answered.

You can see now, can’t you, the importance of holding fast the word of truth in our generation? In doing so, you come to understand the value of maintaining the worship of God, pure and intact. You realize the importance of calling upon the name of the Lord in truth, and crying out to Him for salvation, for wisdom, and for the grace to do what is right. But listen to me now while I read for you Psalm 9, verses 15-20. Here we see what happens when God decides to judge a nation, or even many nations altogether. It says here – “The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made; in the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.” “The Lord is known by the judgment He executes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” “Meditation.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” “For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.” “Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail; let the nations be judged in Your sight.” “Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” “Selah.”

You see, God knows well, how to distinguish between the wicked and the needy when He judges. The needy He will remember, while the wicked will be turned into hell; all those nations that forget God. But now, on the other hand, think of the importance of people in our nation praising God, and even here in our little community, praising God. Our church praising and honoring Him by listening to His word, and singing Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, Sunday by Sunday, in our corporate worship, for what He has done for us, in giving us His Son. God is honored. Should we not continue to pray and call upon His name, and say – “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven? So, we should, for someday our the prayers of Christ’s Church shall be completely fulfilled among the nations.

And if you look back to verse 1, you will see how He ought to worshiped and praised for this. “I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.” “I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” “When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence.” “For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.” “You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever.” “O enemy, destructions are finished forever!” “And You have destroyed cities; even their memory has perished.” “But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment.” “He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgment for the peoples in

uprightness.” What a mighty, wise, and wonderful God we have, who knows how to judge righteously in every way.

During those times in the future when God will be judging the nations who will not have Christ rule over them, God’s people will find that He will care for them in very precious and wonderful ways. In His great love for them, He would have them to know, as it says in verse 9 – “The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord have not forsaken those who seek You.” Oh, this is such good news in troublous times like those that we live in, where so much is uncertain, in this nation and the nations of the world. Listen to verse 11-14. “Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion!” “Declare His deeds among the people.” “When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble.” “Have mercy on me, O Lord!” “Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of Zion.” “I will rejoice in Your salvation.”

Is this how you look at the future; at what is coming for the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ? When the Lord avenges blood, in bringing His judgements, He will not forget the cry of His own; the humble ones who call upon His name. Why? Because of Jesus. The Lord Jesus has laid down His life so that you could be lifted up from the gates of death, so that God could forgive all of your sins, and so that you could become one of His true worshipers. Will you not tell of all His praise in the gates of this Zion, and rejoice in God’s salvation in Christ? We have so much to praise Him for; so many reasons to worship Him forever. Let’s see to it that we do so, both now and forevermore, by His grace, and be faithful to Him.