

## JEREMIAH 43

## HIDDEN STONES IN TAHPANHES

In the foregoing chapter, Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God; and by that message, the case was made so very plain that one would have thought no more words about it were necessary. But alas! We find it to be quite otherwise. When the prophet had finished speaking the message which the Lord had given him to convey to the people, they accused him of speaking falsely and of misrepresenting the Divine Word. For some reason, however, they were unwilling to flat-out accuse him of treachery. So they suggested that Baruch (who was still accompanying Jeremiah as his faithful friend) had incited him to urge them to return to the land of Judah, with the intention of betraying them into the hand of the Babylonians – either for death or for exile.

Thus the terrified people persisted in the paths of their own choosing, and pursued the way to Egypt. They left the inn of Chimham, and they settled at Tahpanhes – a frontier town on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River. Surely another ingredient of bitterness was added to Jeremiah's cup by this rebellious obstinacy; it would not be controlled by his words, it resisted his entreaties, and it suggested that his advice for their own best interests was tainted by treachery. How awful that these people would malign and misunderstand the man who had spent 40 years of his life in consistent public ministry – endeavoring to save them from the bad effects of evil counsel, and to recall them to a simple and absolute faith in the God of their forefathers!

With the exception of his friend Baruch, Jeremiah had no human arm upon which to lean for support or sympathy. Together, the two friends very reluctantly accompanied the Jewish remnant to Egypt, for the prophet's life of protest against his people's iniquities was not yet complete. No sooner had the people settled in their new home, than he was led by the Lord to give them another Divine message.

In the town of Tahpanhes, there was a palace for Pharaoh Hophra, who occupied the throne of Egypt at this time. Near the entrance of this palace, there was a brick-kiln, or a furnace in which clay bricks were dried or baked. God told Jeremiah to take great stones in his hand; and in the sight of all the Jewish remnant, he was to hide them in the clay of the brick pavement there. "On these stones," the prophet said, "the king of Babylon shall set his throne, and spread out his royal pavilion upon them." The Jews had imagined that they would be safe from the hands of Nebuchadnezzar if they fled to Egypt; but now they were finding out that those hopes were in vain, for the troubles that they thought they

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Johanan and the people deny Jeremiah's message to be God's Word – verses 1-3*
- ❖ *They disobey God's clear command and go down to Egypt anyway – verses 4-7*
- ❖ *The Lord gives Jeremiah another message to convey to the people, after they have arrived in Egypt – verses 8-13*





were escaping from in Judah would follow them to their new home. God would send King Nebuchadnezzar into the land of Egypt also, and he would spread his royal pavilion over the very spot where Jeremiah had hidden these stones. The clay represented Egypt in its weakness, but the stones were a symbol of Babylon in its

its power; and thus Jeremiah laid the foundation of the future palace of the king of Babylon, to the subversion of the palace of the king of Egypt. Pharaoh's palace was built of clay bricks, but that of the king of Babylon would be made of large and durable stones.

Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar would smite the land of Egypt, and kindle a fire in the temples of its idols. He would be Jehovah's servant in this work; and therefore, whatever he did would be done by Jehovah Himself. He would burn the temples, and he would carry away the idols as trophies of his own power and might. Nor would the conquest of the land be difficult. As easily as any shepherd in the open field wraps himself in his cloak; so would Nebuchadnezzar take the whole land of Egypt in his hand, and be able to throw it around himself like a light garment. Then, being dressed with booty, so to speak, he would leave the land as a complete victor. Thus the very pride of Egypt would be put to shame, and her glory would be trampled in the dust.

In light of these dreadful predictions, the Jews who had just fled to Egypt would now realize that there was no safety for them there. They had run away from their own country, for fear that the Babylonians would take revenge upon them for Ishmael's murder of Gedaliah; but the Babylonians would follow them into Egypt. And there they would fall, right alongside the Egyptians, upon whose arm of flesh they had such a tendency to lean.

Let us not conclude our study of this chapter without first dropping to our knees in prayer before the mercy-seat, beseeching the Lord for the continual leadings of His Holy Spirit's restraining influences. Who would have supposed it to be possible that a nation would have been given up by the Lord to judgment because of their impiety, and that the remnant would have set forth even more outrages and marks of rebellion against God? But alas! What is man, despite his highest attainments, if he is left to himself – even for a moment? The best of men are only men, and they are all equally capable of falling; for corruption is the same in all people, by nature. It is a certain and unquestionable truth that if we are not like Johanan and his countrymen, it is not because of anything in us; rather, it is entirely due to the merciful grace of the Lord. It is Jesus alone Who keeps us from falling, and Who will present us faultless before our heavenly Father's throne, with exceedingly great joy! (Jude 24)

*Lord, we pray for grace to seek Your grace! Keep us from falling into the depths of sin that Johanan and the Jewish remnant were guilty of. Help us to never grieve Your Holy Spirit by rebelling against You and Your Word. Amen.*