

CHAPTER 43

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise. Here is,

I. The people's contempt of this message; they denied it to be the word of God (v. 1-3) and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them (v. 4-7).

II. God's pursuit of them with another message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt (v. 8-13).

◀44▶ JEREMIAH 43:1-7

THE PROPHET'S INSOLENT REPLY

What God said to the builders of Babel may be truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with: *Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do,* ^{◀116▶}Genesis 11:6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself says to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have to say to it.

I. They deny it to be a message from God: *Johanán, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely,* v. 2. See here,

1. What was the cause of their disobedience — it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man. They were *proud men* that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments and the control of their designs, no, not by the divine wisdom, by the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* ^{◀117▶}Exodus 5:2. The proud unhumiliated heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell.

2. What was the colour for their disobedience. They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God: *The Lord hath not sent thee* on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that what was said came from God or (which I rather think) though they were convinced of it they would not own it. The light shone strongly in their face, but they either shut their eyes against it or would not confess that they saw it. Note, The reason why men deny the scriptures to be the word of God is because they are resolved not to conform to scripture-rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a wilful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from Mount Sinai, they would have said that it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had he not waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them? What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed? And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why, truly, they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest (v. 3), *Baruch sets thee on against us*. A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to *deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans*; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzaradan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised ungrateful remnant. But the best services are no fences against malice and slander. Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name an authority to patronise so villainous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry are industrious to bring a bad name upon it. When men will persist in sin they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours. It is well for persons who are thus misrepresented that their witness is in heaven and their record on high.

II. They determine to go to Egypt notwithstanding. They resolve not to *dwell in the land of Judah*, as God had ordered them (v. 4), but to go themselves with one consent and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came *from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah*, out of a

sincere affection to that land, they would not leave to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt (v. 5), *men, women, and children* (v. 6), a long journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind of faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men that they know not when they are well off, and often ruin themselves by endeavouring to better themselves; and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though ever so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them (and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their consciences; theirs is the worst of tyranny who say to men's souls, even to good men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*), partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way. Though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe that they were voluntary in going along with them; and who could have blamed them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord if the prophets themselves had acted so? They *came to Tahpanhes*, a famous city of Egypt (so called from a queen of that name, ~~1111B~~1 Kings 11:19), the same with *Hanes* (~~230B~~Isaiah 30:4); it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, v. 9. No place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city and near the court, so little mindful were they of Joseph's wisdom, who would have his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah than in the most pompous populous cities of Egypt.

~~248B~~ JEREMIAH 43:8-13

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES IN EGYPT

We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites; but there,

1. He received *the word of the Lord*; it *came to him*. God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and, when his

ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him.

2. What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world. Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and entrusted to deliver when he was in Egypt. We may suppose that he rendered what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them and instructing and comforting them; but only two messages of his, which he had received immediately from God, are recorded, one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself and foretelling its destruction, the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt. God had told them before that if they went into Egypt the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further that the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

I. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take *great stones*, such as are used for foundations, and *lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln*, which is in *the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house* (v. 9), some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks (~~OR~~ Exodus 5:7), which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in *that clay*. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians (they knew not Jeremiah's character), but *in the sight of the men of Judah* to whom he was sent, that, since he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

II. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be,

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in person against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, by the same token that he should *set his throne* in that very place where *these stones* were laid, v. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that, when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy and confirmed in their belief of the extent and

certainly of the divine prescience, to which the smallest and most contingent events are evident. God calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants and he makes what use he pleases of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, are the tools which his providence makes use of.

2. That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy (v. 11): *He shall smite the land of Egypt*; and, though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence (for that is here meant by *death*, as ²⁴⁵Jeremiah 15:2) by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will he shall save alive and carry into *captivity*. The Jews, by going into Egypt, brought the Chaldeans thither, and so did but ill repay those that entertained them. Those who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples and the images of their gods (v. 12): *He shall burn, the houses of the gods of Egypt*, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; the fire of God's wrath fastens upon them, and then he burns some of them and carries others captive, ²⁴⁶Isaiah 46:1. *Beth-shemesh*, or *the house of the sun*, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall *break in pieces* (v. 13) and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates that he should lay all waste when even the temple and the images should not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater and a patron of idolatry; he had his temples and images in honour of the sun as well as the Egyptians; and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man, or wicked nation, a scourge and plague to another.

4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause or avenge its quarrel (v. 12): *He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt*, both beautify and fortify himself with them. He shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour; and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booty, being expert in

war, and expeditious, he shall slip on with as much ease and in as little time, in comparison, *as a shepherd slips on his garment*, when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleases (as Benhadad threatened to do, ~~1116~~ 1 Kings 20:6) he shall *go forth in peace*, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, ~~319~~ Ezekiel 29:19 and 30:10. Babylon lay at a great distance from Egypt, and yet thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-fetched.