

Is Mary the Queen of Heaven Condemned by the Prophet Jeremiah?

By Steve Ray

I received an e-mail from a man considering conversion to the Catholic Church. He wrote:

Now if I could get past Jeremiah, chapter 44, I'd really be a happy camper, (LOL). Stumbled on that passage this morning in my "Quiet Time" (still have SOME residual Protestantism within me I guess), and wondered about the "Queen of Heaven" that the people of Judah were burning incense to. God sure was mad! Who was this "Queen" they were venerating (worshiping? don't know the Hebrew here)? I wonder if they were putting her ahead of God? The struggles continue....but the Lord is faithful!!

I thought it would be good to think through this passage with him.



In Jeremiah 44 the people of Israel were *“burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and were pouring out drink offerings to her”* and they *“made for her sacrificial cakes in her image and poured out drink offerings to her?”* (verse 19).

Jeremiah (left) condemned this idolatry. But Jeremiah 44 is one of those passages that some Protestants confuse and wrongly apply to the Catholic faith. Just like the discussion of Paul in Romans and Galatians (about faith and works) has NOTHING to do with Catholic vs. Protestant debate—it is about Jew and Gentile—so this passage in Jeremiah has nothing to do with the Christian/Catholic faith and our veneration of Mary.

Israel was forbidden to make offerings to “the queen mother” or to worship her. She was a mythical goddess and the conduct of the Israelites was idolatry. See Jeremiah 7 and Jeremiah 14.

This is often used by anti-Catholics against the Catholic veneration of Mary. A few comments are in order.

First, Mary had not yet been Assumed into heaven so there **was no** “real” Queen Mother yet. Mary’s assumption into heaven did not take place until **after** the ascension of our Lord. So, to acknowledge a Queen of Heaven before there really was one was obviously premature at best, idolatrous at worst.

Second, the goddess the Israelites offering sacrifices to was a pagan, mythical goddess. They had displaced their living God with a mythical pagan goddess. Mary is neither a

mythical goddess nor pagan. She is very real. She has NOT replaced God or been “put ahead of God.” We know she is NOT God or a goddess or divine. She is a creature like you and I; yet, she is Mother of our Lord.

Third, the worship or offering of sacrifices to any one or any thing other than the Trinity is blatant idolatry. Paragraph 971 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* declares the veneration of Mary is essentially different than worship.

“All generations will call me blessed”:

The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship. The Church rightly honors the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God, to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration. The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an “epitome of the whole Gospel,” express this devotion to the Virgin Mary.”



It was wrong for ancient Israel to offer sacrifices to any thing or any one but to God alone, so the worship of a pagan and mythical “Queen of Heaven” was wrong by virtue of its idolatry. Worshiping Mary would be just as sinful. BUT, the Church has always forbidden worshiping or making offerings to Mary or anyone but God alone denouncing such practices as idolatry.

Fourth, you say ask who the Israelites were “venerating”? *Venerating* and *worship* are as different as friendship and married love, as different as a contract and a covenant. *Veneration* is showing honor and respect; *worship* is adoration reserved for the Trinity alone. No knowledgeable Catholic gets these confused. Catholics venerate Mary (and to a lesser degree any person worthy of honor and respect), but they worship God. BIG difference.

Fifth, there is also a HUGE difference between sacrificing to a pagan goddess Queen of Heaven and honoring a legitimate Queen of Heaven who is Queen by virtue of being the Mother of Our Lord. Hope you can see that difference.

Sixth, why is Mary the rightful and proper Queen of Heaven? Jesus is a Jewish king. He sits on the throne of his fathers David and Solomon (Lk 1:31-33 “And behold, you will

conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Would it not be correct to say that Jesus would be the BEST of Jewish kings and since the Law demands that we honor our father and mother—would he not honor his mother better than any one else?

How did the kings of Judah honor their mothers? Listen to 1 Kings 2:19 “So Bathsheba [mother of the king] went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right.”

From that point on the kings in the line of David, all had queens but they were *not* their wives—they were their mothers. Over and over again the Old Testament refers to the queen as the “Queen Mother.” (See my article on Queen Mother).



Now Jesus comes along and eventually he is seated on his throne in heaven. Do you think he would do less for his mother than the sinful kings of Judah? Not on your life. As a Jewish king Jesus would—better than any other king—raise his mother up to be his queen too. That is one reason we believe in the Assumption and the Queenship of Mary. It is simply allowing Scripture and history to inform our theology.

The Apostle John, who was given the responsibility to care for Mary during her earthly life, saw a vision of her as the queen in heaven in Revelation 12:1-2. Was John putting Mary ahead of God when he reveals her as the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of the Church whose children are those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17)? Would we dare say John is idolatrous, offering sacrifice to a pagan goddess, putting a mythical deity in the place of God? Of course not!

Seventh, I think this is also a *very* serious matter. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Mary said, “All generations will call me blessed!” (Lk 1:48). What Church does that still?

And what about those who DON'T? Do you want to stand before the Son on the last day and say, I was one who did not venerate and honor your mother—I ignored, or worse yet, maligned Your mother the queen?

To ignore and not venerate the TRUE QUEEN OF HEAVEN is to insult her Son—who DOES honor her because he loves her and he obeyed the Law perfectly.

When Jeremiah rightfully condemned the worship of a pagan, mythical, goddess Queen of Heaven, he was not denying that there would someday **be a true** Queen of Heaven, nor does it imply, as anti-Catholics assume, that Catholics worship or adore Mary.

Catholics worship God alone and venerate the Queen Mother—who is not a goddess but an exalted woman who worships her Son along with us. Hope that helps.