

Jer. 29:1 ¶ Now these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

Jer. 29:2 (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

Jer. 29:3 By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,

In this chapter we have the contents of a letter that Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon in the name of “the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel.” We are reminded that these captives included some of the most important in leadership as well as the most talented and skillful in areas that would benefit Babylon. Though it may appear that He has rejected them, the LORD is affirming that He has not rejected them; He is judging them for their sin.

Jeremiah’s letter was delivered by Elasah, another of the sons of Shaphan the scribe, and Gemariah, the son of Hilkiyah the high priest. It seems that they were actually messengers from King Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar, but they also delivered Jeremiah’s letter.

Jer. 29:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

Jer. 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

Jer. 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

Jer. 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

As Jeremiah begins to deliver God’s message to the people, he reminds them that it is the LORD that caused them to be taken captive to Babylon. YHWH is now instructing them to settle down and make new lives for themselves in Babylon. They are to build houses, plant gardens, start new families and increase their numbers. They are to dwell in peace among their captors and seek God’s face to provide that peace. This would involve praying for those in authority over them as well as their Babylonian neighbors. Only by faith in God’s provision could they be assured of establishing such peace among their neighbors.

As I was reading through this section again, I noticed that the command was to “pray for the city” to which you were taken captive. This involves more than just prayer for the individuals; it includes prayer for the peace of the city as a whole—as represented by the government and its leaders.

I liked this quote from JFB pertaining to this section: “In all states of life let us not throw away the comfort we *may* have, because we have not all we *would* have.”

This section of scripture contains important truth. The LORD is a faithful Father and will follow through with what is best for us in spite of how it may appear to us. He knew that His people needed to understand that they could not trust in false gods. He knew that they needed to be placed in a position that would encourage them to seek Him in repentance and obedience. He knew that it would take time to accomplish a lifestyle change among His people.

Jer. 29:8 ¶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

Jer. 29:9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah goes on to warn the captives not to believe the false prophets or diviners that are prophesying to you according to your desires to return home. He declares point blank that their prophecies are lies even though they are declaring them in the name of the LORD. They are not declaring the true word of the LORD. They are responding to the desires of the people for their personal profit.

False prophets prosper when God’s people are ignorant of His word or choose to interpret God’s word in light of their own desires. It is so important for the child of God to be familiar with the whole counsel of God in order to be equipped to recognize false prophets.

Jer. 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Jer. 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

The truth according to the LORD is that the captivity will last for 70 years. The good news—The people will be allowed to return home at the end of that 70 years. Of course, that will mean that many will die in captivity; but they can know that those that survive until that time will have the opportunity to go home. The LORD will personally see to it!

Verse 11 has been memorized by many as a word of encouragement and promise from the LORD. In context, these words are directed to the captives in Babylon regarding the LORD’s purpose concerning their captivity. This captivity is actually an action that will serve as a refining fire for those in Babylon. The LORD was angry with their continued sin and rebellion, but His actions were motivated by love and goodness to encourage them to turn from their wicked ways. His desire is for them to dwell in faith and submission to Him and experience His blessed peace.

Is it wrong for the believer to appropriate words of encouragement that in context are applied to Israel at a specific point in time? No. Though you always need to be aware of the context and purpose behind such verses, you can count on the fact that they reflect the unchanging character of God and His heart towards His people. I believe these words can honestly be applied to every child of God. His heart is always to bless His children with peace and deliverance from the captivity of sin. God's thoughts toward us are always for good—not evil. They are always aimed towards accomplishing our sanctification before Him.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

2 Thessalonians 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

Jer. 29:12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

Jer. 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Jer. 29:14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

The LORD goes on to provide hope for His people. At the end of the 70 years they can seek His deliverance in prayer and He will give them the answer they seek. The key is to seek God with "all your heart"—a heart that has willingly chosen to submit to God as LORD. If they pray with that attitude of submission, the LORD promises to bring them back home as a nation from all over the Babylonian empire.

Daniel evidently cherished this letter from Jeremiah. Though he would not get to return to Jerusalem, he eagerly sought the LORD in prayer on behalf of his people when he recognized that the 70 years were coming to an end. The first 19 verses of chapter 9 provide a record of that prayer.

Daniel 9:2–6 "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land."

Daniel was seeking God with all his heart, and we are told that the angel Gabriel was dispatched to answer his prayer while he was still praying. The prophecy of the 70 weeks determined to bring about the final redemption of the Jewish people was given to Daniel as part of the answer to his prayer. (see Journal on Daniel 9.) This answer looked far further in the future than just the return from the Babylonian captivity; it embraced the final return of last dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the nations.

Jer. 29:15 ¶ Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

Jer. 29:16 Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;

Jer. 29:17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

Jer. 29:18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

Jer. 29:19 Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

In these verses the LORD is declaring through Jeremiah that no matter what the prophets in Babylon are declaring, those who were left behind in Jerusalem, your relatives, are going to be destroyed by sword, famine, and disease. He compares them to worthless figs not fit to be eaten. Why? Because “they are so evil.” Those who are carried captive to other kingdoms will be cursed, ruined, scorned, and treated shamefully. Again, the emphasis is on the fact that these actions are a result of God’s judgment against the nation. The heathen nations are only victorious against God’s people because it is according to His will.

The people of Judah/Israel had refused to listen to God’s prophets, so they would now suffer the consequences.

The Jews had evidently assumed that they were guaranteed protection because of God’s covenant with David, but they obviously were ignoring the words of the Psalmist.

*Psalms 89:29–36 “His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; **If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.** Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”*

David's kingdom will endure forever, even though the throne will carry no authority during periods of judgment.

Neither did they regard the words of Moses.

Deuteronomy 28:15-25 "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.... The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish....The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

Jer. 29:20 Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Jer. 29:21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

Jer. 29:22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which *are* in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

Jer. 29:23 Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and *am* a witness, saith the LORD.

Though His people have refused to listen to His word as declared through His prophets, the LORD is yet again sending a message by His faithful prophet Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon.

Interesting to note that he specifically identifies the false prophets—Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah. Those who name false prophets today are often berated and beaten verbally—often through the use of scripture. Yes, we are to speak the truth in love—love for God and with a heart of love for the sinner. Those who are spiritually more mature and discerning need to watch out for those who are weaker and less discerning. To allow false prophets to prosper with impunity does not show one's love for the LORD or for those being deceived by the false prophets. The LORD is very clear in declaring that He is going to have these false prophets publicly killed by Nebuchadnezzar. Obviously, their deaths will be according to a perceived offense in the sight of

the king, but the LORD is declaring that this will be a result of His purpose and authority.

God's judgment against these two false prophets will result in their names being invoked to proclaim God's curse against someone.

Why is the LORD going to kill them? Because they are adulterers and "have spoken lying words in My name." God is very jealous for the honor of His name.

Leviticus 19:12 "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD."

Isaiah 48:11 "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."

Malachi 2:2 "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart."

This is a truth that is lightly regarded in our culture today. The phrase "Oh My God" is widely used today—even among those who profess the LORD as Savior. There is nothing reverential or respectful to God in having His name so used.

The Psalmist provides us even more insight. Heeding the truth of God's word is integral to honoring the LORD's name.

Psalms 138:2 "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

Personally, I think this is directly tied to the truth that Jesus, the Son of God, is declared to be the Word incarnate.

John 1:1 & 14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Jer. 29:24 ¶ ***Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,***
Jer. 29:25 ***Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,***
Jer. 29:26 ***The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.***
Jer. 29:27 ***Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?***
Jer. 29:28 ***For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.***

The LORD now goes on to single out another man, Shemaiah the Nehelamite, who has deceitfully presumed to act with the authority of the LORD. He had sent a letter to Zephaniah, as representative of the priests. He had evidently previously declared that the LORD had granted him authority to replace Jehoiada. He further stated that this authority was to have been used to imprison crazy men representing themselves as prophets. In light of that fact, why hadn't Jeremiah been put in prison. He then advised the priests of the letter that Jeremiah had sent to the captives telling the people establish homes there because they would not be going home any time soon.

It is sadly quite evident even in America today that those who represent the truth of God's word are judged by the unbelieving masses to be crazy and dangerous to society instead of as voices of truth and salvation.

You would think that the captivity itself was evidence enough to validate Jeremiah as God's true prophet, just as you would think that the many evidences of the truth of the prophecies of God's word in evidence today would validate the teaching of those who faithfully declare His word. One of the most obvious truths in evidence today is the rebirth of the nation of Israel.

Jer. 29:29 And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

Jer. 29:30 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

Jer. 29:31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

Jer. 29:32 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

Shemaiah's letter did not produce the intended result. Zephaniah took the letter and read it to Jeremiah. This priest evidently did understand that the reality of their situation validated Jeremiah as God's true prophet.

The LORD then gives Jeremiah a response to what he has heard that he is to declare in a letter to the captives. Because Shemaiah was a hypocrite and had inspired the people to believe his lies, he would be punished. He would be left without descendants to carry on his family name, and he would not live to experience God's blessing on those who responded in repentance and obedience. It is clear that this was meant to be a warning to others who had chosen rebellion rather than submission.