

## Jeremiah Chapter 29

Verses 1-14: Jeremiah's "letter" to the exiles taken away to Babylon in 597 B.C. presents Israel's true hope for the future in contrast to the empty promises offered by the false prophets.

**Jeremiah 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;"**

"The letter": Jeremiah, shortly after the 597 B.C. deportation of many countrymen (compare verse 2), wrote to comfort them in exile.

Many had been carried into captivity into Babylon. This letter is sent to them. The word "residue" lets us know there had been more elders than were living now. Jeremiah could have dictated this letter to someone to write to the people. Jeremiah was well known to them because he had prophesied to them while they were still in Jerusalem. We discussed before that Jeremiah had remained in Jerusalem. The priests and prophets were treated no differently than the average person. They were taken captive too.

**Jeremiah 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;)"**

These were of Judah. Jeconiah is the same as Jehoiachin, who was carried captive into Babylon when he had reigned but three months.

"And the queen": Not Jeconiah's wife, for he had none; but his mother, whose name was Nehushta. And who was carried captive with him (2 Kings 24:8).

"And the eunuchs": Or "chamberlains" to the queen. The Targum calls them princes. These were of the king's household, his courtiers; and such persons have been everywhere, and in all ages, court favorites.

"And the princes of Judah and Jerusalem": The noblemen and grandees of the nation.

"And the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem": Whom Nebuchadnezzar took with him, partly for his own use in his own country. And partly that the Jews might be deprived of such artificers that could assist in fortifying their city, and providing them with military weapons (see Jer. 24:1).

Jeconiah spent his days of captivity in Babylon. They were departed because they were captured. The queen here is possibly speaking of the queen mother. The eunuchs were used as servants in the king's house.

**Jeremiah 29:3 "By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,"**

Perhaps the brother of Ahikam, and of Jaazaniah (Jer. 26:24).

"And Gemariah the son of Hilkiah": To distinguish him from Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe (Jer. 36:10).

"Whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon": As his ambassadors, on what account it is not certain. Perhaps to pay the tribute money to him; or to treat with him about the restoration of some of the captives. Or to cultivate friendship, and promise submission, and that he would faithfully keep the covenant he had made with him. And perhaps he might be jealous of Jeconiah using his interest with the king of Babylon for his restoration, which could not be acceptable to Zedekiah. And this might be one reason why he admitted his messengers to carry Jeremiah's letter to the captives, if he knew of it, or saw it. Since it exhorted them not to think of returns, but provide for a long continuance where they were. However, by the hand of these messengers Jeremiah sent his letter to them.

"Saying" (as follows):

This is just explaining who took them to Babylon. It appears that Elasah and Gemariah took Jeremiah's letter to Babylon, when they took these captives there. They were sent by Zedekiah.

Verses 4-10: Jeremiah's counsel to Israelites in Babylon was to take all the steps in living as colonists planning to be there for a long time (70 years, 29:10, as 25:11). Further, they were to seek Babylon's peace and intercede in prayer for it, their own welfare being bound with it (verse 7; compare Ezra 6:10; 7:23).

**Jeremiah 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;"**

For the letter was written by the order of the Lord, was edited by him, and was sent in his name. And the titles which the Lord here takes are worthy of notice. "The Lord of hosts": of the armies above and below. That does according to his pleasure in heaven and in earth, with whom nothing is impossible. Who could easily destroy the enemies of his people, and deliver them, either immediately by his power, or by means of armies on earth, whom he could assemble, and send at His pleasure. Or by legions of angels at his command: "the God of Israel"; their covenant God. Who still continued to be so, notwithstanding their sins and transgressions, and though in captivity in a foreign land. To preserve them from the idolatry of the country they were in, and to observe unto them that he only was to be worshipped by them.

"Unto all that are carried away captives": Or, "to all of the captivity"; or, "to the whole captivity". High and low, rich and poor; this letter was an interesting one to them all.

"Whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon": For though their sins and iniquities were the moving, deserving, and procuring causes of their captivity; and Nebuchadnezzar and his army the instruments. Yet God was the efficient cause. The Chaldeans could never have carried them captive, if the Lord had not willed it, or had not done it by them. For there is no "evil of this kind in a city, and the Lord hath not done it" (Amos 3:6).

The main difference in this prophecy and the ones we have been reading that Jeremiah gave, is this one was written. Jeremiah sent the message by letter because he could not be there in person. The LORD wants all the captives to understand that they are there, because He wanted it that way. They are there because God had judged them, and now is chastening them so they will repent and return to worship of God. God has not forgotten them. He still loves them. The captivity is for their own good.

**Jeremiah 29:5 "Build ye houses, and dwell [in them]; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;"**

Intimating hereby that they must not expect a return into their own land in any short time. But that they should continue many years where they were. Suggesting also, that as they had ability, so they should have liberty, of building themselves houses. Nor should they be interrupted by their enemies. Nor would their houses be taken from them, when built. But they should dwell peaceably and quietly in them, as their own. Which they might assure themselves of from the Lord, who gives these, and the following directions.

"And plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them": And live as comfortably as you can in a foreign country. Plant your gardens with vines and pomegranates, and all sorts of fruitful trees the country produces. And fear not the fruit being taken away from you. Depend upon it, you shall eat the fruit of your own labor, and not be deprived of it.

It appears from this that they had hesitated to do anything permanent, because they thought they would not be captive for long. Now God is telling them it will be for a long time. They must not be idle. They must be working while they are captives. Instead of complaining about the captivity, they should be making the best of it. They should build houses and plant gardens to supply their own needs. They must be a good example to these heathen people. In an unusual way, they will represent God to these heathens. The way they live in adverse circumstances, will tell their heathen captives about their faith in God.

**Jeremiah 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."**

That is, such as had no wives, who were either bachelors or widowers. Not that they were to take wives of the Chaldeans, but of those of their own nation. For intermarriages with Heathens were forbidden them. And this they were to do, in order to propagate their posterity, and keep up a succession.

"And take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands". Or "men"; preserving and establishing the right of parents to give their children in marriage, and pointing to them their duty to provide suitable yoke fellows for them. And hereby is signified, that not only they, but their children after them, should continue in this state of captivity.

"That they may bear sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there.

"And not diminished": Like their ancestors in Egypt, who grew very numerous amidst all their afflictions and bondage.

We must remember that they had been reduced to a remnant. Many had died from famine, others died by the sword. The few left must now multiply, and not die out. They are to go ahead and marry just as they would if they were at home. Babylon will be their home for a long time.

**Jeremiah 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."**

The prosperity and happiness of Babylon, or any other city in Chaldea, were they were placed. This they were to do by prayer and supplication to God, and by all other means that might be any ways conducive to the good of the state where they were.

"Whither I have caused you to be carried away captives": And as long as they continued so; for being under the protection of the magistrates of it, though Heathens, they owed them submission. And were under obligation to contribute to their peace and welfare.

"And pray unto the Lord for it": The city, where they dwelt. For the continuance, safety, peace, and prosperity of it. And therefore, much more ought the natives of a place to seek and pray for its good, and do all that in them lies to promote it. And still more should the saints and people of God pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Or the church of God, where they are born, and brought up in a spiritual sense (see 1 Tim. 2:1).

"For in the peace thereof shall ye have peace": Which is an argument taken from self-interest. Intimating, that while the city in which they were was in safety and prosperity, was in a flourishing condition. As to its health and trade, they would partake more or less with them of the same advantages. And on the other hand, should they be distressed with the sword, famine, or pestilence, or any grievous calamity, they would be involved in the same.

They should act with respect to their captors. They should pray for the peace of Babylon, because it will bring peace to them as well, since they are living there now.

**Jeremiah 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."**

(See Jer. 29:4).

"Let not your prophets and your diviners, that [be] in the midst of you, deceive you": Their false prophets, as the Targum; and there were many such in the captivity (see Ezek. 13:2). And such who pretended to divine and foretell future things, and so impose upon the people, who were too apt to believe them. These insinuated, that in a little time they should have their liberty, and return to their own land again, contrary to the prophecies that came from the Lord himself.

"Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed": For that of a speedy return to their own land was no other than a dream, which they both dreamed themselves. Their thoughts running on it in the daytime, they dreamed of it at night. And fancied it was from the Lord; a divine dream; and so built much upon it. And also, which they encouraged the false prophets and diviners to dream, and tell their dreams, by their listening to them, and being pleased with them, giving credit to them as if they came from God.

Jeremiah had prophesied against these false prophets before they went into captivity. He now warns them again not to listen to the false prophets, diviners, and dreamers. Their own dreams are the ones they have imagined. Sometimes they dream of things they were thinking about before they went to bed. It is important to be able to determine whether a dream is of God or not.

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

They pretended to have the authority of God for what they said. That their prophecies and dreams were from him, and as such they delivered them in his name. Though they were false ones; that they might be the better received by the people.

"I have not sent them, saith the Lord": They had no mission or commission from the Lord, no warrant or authority from him. They set up themselves; and ran without being sent; and prophesied out of their own hearts what came into their heads. The fancies of their own brain, or the delusions of Satan, under whose power and influence they were. Therefore, sad must be the case of a people giving heed to such seducing spirits.

They pretend they are of God by saying "Thus saith the LORD", but their prophecies are false. They are not of God. One false prophecy was that they would only be in captivity just two or three years.

**Jeremiah 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."**

When reading this prophecy near the time of the end of the captivity, Daniel knew what God was about to do and he began to pray and confess his sins and the sins of his people (Dan. 9:2-3). He did not know the exact timing, but he knew God would fulfill His promise.

(See the note on 25:11).

God does not leave them in the dark. He tells them they will be captives for 70 years. They must keep the faith and remain loyal to God in this heathen land. If they are faithful God will bring them home after the 70 years.

**Jeremiah 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."**

"Thoughts of peace": This assured God's intentions to bring about blessings in Israel's future (compare chapters 30 to 33).

God's thoughts are not evil toward them. He loves them. He promises them their freedom after the 70 years. He has given them something to look forward to. This captivity is to make them repent and return to God. It is for their good, not God's. God's thoughts are upon them constantly. He loves them, and wants to fellowship with them. The inanimate objects they had been worshipping, had no power of thought. To mention the thoughts of God shows Him to be a living Spirit.

Verses 12-14: "Shall ye call upon me": What God planned, He also gave the people opportunity to participate in by sincere prayer (verse 13; compare 1 John 5:14-15).

For the "call" - answer theme (see the note on 11:11).

Verses 12-13: The Lord would restore His people when they turned back to Him and sought Him with all their hearts (Psalms 50:15; 145:19). There could be no restoration without true repentance. Those who earnestly seek God anywhere and everywhere will, in time, cultivate the sacred art of meeting Him at every crossroad and of feeling His breath in every wind. Through pain and victory, each new step will help them come to know Him better.

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

When the expected end is about to be give. When God intends and is about to bestow a mercy, he gives his people a spirit of prayer to ask for it. And even the promise of it is a considerable argument to encourage and engage more to pray for it.

"And ye shall go and pray unto me": Walk in my ways; so Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech. Or rather ye shall go into your private closets, or into those public places where prayer was accustomed to being made, and there put up your petitions. Or it may be the meaning is, that they should continue praying unto him. Should pray without ceasing, until they enjoyed the blessing, and had the expected end given them.

"And I will hearken unto you": God is a God hearing prayer. He listens to the requests of his people, and answers them in his own time and way. Which is no small encouragement to pray unto him.

God has not stopped listening to their prayers and neither has He stopped listening for their prayers. Praying to God is a way of fellowshiping with Him. It is also a way of expressing belief in Him. "Hearken" is to listen intently.

**Jeremiah 29:13 "And ye shall seek me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart."**

When persons seek the Lord rightly, they always find him. God hearing prayer; a God in Christ; bestowing favors upon them; granting them his presence. Indulging them in communion with him; and favoring them with fresh supplies of his grace, and everything needful for them. Every mercy, temporal and spiritual. That is, when they seek him in Christ, who is the only way to the Father, under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit. In the exercise of faith upon him and his promises; with fervency of spirit and passion of mind. With diligence and persistence; with earnest desires and strong affections; and, as follows, with all sincerity of soul.

"When ye shall search for me with all your heart": Which, as Calvin rightly observes, does not design perfection, but integrity and sincerity. When they draw nigh with a true heart, and call upon him in truth, and search for him with eagerness, with a hearty desire to find him, as men search for gold, and silver, and hid treasure.

God is interested in the heart of man. They had to believe in their hearts that God existed, before they would seek Him. He is never far away. When they seek God, it is inevitable that they will find Him. He wants to be found. He was there all the time waiting for them to seek Him. The heart is what man is. If the heart is right with God, the person is saved. Read Romans 10:9-10 to see it is the same for the Christian. Salvation is of the heart. Look with me at what Jesus said about this very thing.

Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

The following Scripture speaks of the importance of the heart.

Hebrews 10:22 "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

**Jeremiah 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."**

"I will be found of you": The Lord would answer their prayer, by returning the Jews to their land, compare Daniels example and God's response (Dan. 9:4-27). Fulfillment would occur in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and beyond this in even fuller measure after the Second Advent of their Messiah (compare Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13; 14:27; 12:1-3, 13).

For Israel's regathering (see the note on 23:3).

This is not only speaking of bringing them back from captivity to their Promised Land, but it also speaks of them being restored to fellowship with their God. The covenant made to Abraham is still theirs if they obey God. The return to their homeland is a prophecy fulfilled just after the 70 years, but is also speaking of the return of the natural Jew to the Holy Land now.

Verses 15-19: "Because ye have said": Amazingly still rejecting God's true message, Jewish captives listened to false prophets among them (compare verses 8-9; 21-23). This was the very sin which would cause God to send a further deportation to those still in Judah (586 B.C.).

**Jeremiah 29:15 "Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;"**

That is, some of them. For here the Lord, by the prophet, turns from the godly among the captives, whom he had been advising, encouraging, and comforting before, to those who gave heed to the false prophets. Who promised them a speedy return to their own land, and which they believed. And therefore, rejected and despised the prophecies of Jeremiah, and others.

"The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon": And therefore, stood in no need of other prophets that were in Judea, or in Jerusalem, nor should hearken to them. But believe those that were raised up among themselves, rather than others at a distance. And though these were false prophets, yet, being such that prophesied to them things that were agreeable, they were willing to believe them, and to consider them, and receive them, as prophets sent of God, when they were not.

This is speaking more of the present than of the future. God is explaining again why He is punishing them. They do not want to keep Jeremiah as their prophet. They would rather listen to the false prophets.

**Jeremiah 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;"**

Therefore, the Lord sent the following message to them, informing them that it was so far from being true that they should in a short time return to Jerusalem. That, on the other hand, they that were there should soon be with them in captivity, or be destroyed".

"The king that sitteth on the throne of David": That is, King Zedekiah, who was then the reigning king at Jerusalem.

"And of all the people that dwelleth in this city": The city Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was, and from whence this letter was written, in the name of the Lord, to the captives at Babylon.



"And of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity": That lived in the several parts of the land of Judea, who were left behind, and not carried captive, when those were to whom these words are directed.

**Jeremiah 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."**

“Like vile figs ... cannot be eaten”: Compare the principle (of Jer. chapter 24).

The throne of David had now been taken over by an evil king. Those who were not willing to be chastened of God by captivity, will be thought of as God's rebellious children. They will be severely punished. They are so evil they will not even allow God to teach them His ways. They refuse to receive their rightful punishment from God. They are rebellious and God will bring famine and the sword to destroy them. "Vile figs" are good for nothing but to destroy. Figs symbolize the house of Israel.

**Jeremiah 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 a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:"**

Or, "follow after them"; such as should make their escape out of the city, and go into Egypt, or other countries, for shelter and safety. Should be pursued by the vengeance of God, and should fall by sword, famine, or pestilence, in other places.

"And will deliver them": Such as should not perish by the above mentioned calamities.

"To be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth": Where they should be scattered, and live in exile. Or "for a shaking to all the kingdoms of the earth"; who should shake and tremble at such a dreadful spectacle of vengeance. Or rather they should shake and tremble at the wrath of God upon them. Or else their enemies, among whom they should be, should shake their heads at them, by way of insult and triumph over them.

"To be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them": Where men shall look at them with amazement, and hiss at them, and reproach them, as the off scouring of the world.

We discussed that this is like rebellious children. Rebellion was thought of as witchcraft. They had been unfaithful to God. They had an opportunity to be chastised for their unfaithfulness but refused even that. Now God has given up on changing them, and will deal harshly with them. Everywhere they go they will be thought of as outcasts. They will have no respect shown them at all.

**Jeremiah 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."**

Which were spoken to them by the prophets. Not hearkening to them, but despising them, were the same as not hearkening to him, and despising him. Contempt of God, and his word, was the cause of their ruin (see 2 Chron. 36:15).

"Which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets": Such as Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and others.

"Rising up early, and sending them": Which denotes the frequency of their mission. The diligent care of God towards them; and his earnest solicitude for their welfare. And the plenty of means they were favored with; all which were aggravations of their sin.

"But ye would not hear, saith the Lord": The words of the Lord by his prophets. The counsel and admonitions he gave them. But pursued their own ways and counsels, and listened to the false prophets.

They had ears to hear, but they did not hear. They did not listen to the warnings God sent them by the prophets.

Verses 20-23: The Lord would carry out the death penalty for false prophets (14:14-15; Deut. 18:14-21), by delivering "Ahab" and "Zedekiah" into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, who would put them to death for inciting treason. False teaching ultimately demonstrates itself in a lifestyle of greed and immorality (2 Peter 2:14-20; Jude 8-16).

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

What he was now about to say concerning their false prophets.

"All ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon": All that were carried captive along with Jeconiah. Some parts of this letter are directed to one sort of the captives, and others to another sort of them. Some being good men, some bad. But what follows all are called upon to observe, good and bad. It being a prediction of a certain event, which they would see fulfilled in a short time; and therefore, might be of service of them. To the godly, for the confirmation of them in the belief of what the Lord had promised; and to the rest, to make them stop giving heed to false prophets, that should here after arise.

This just repeats again, that the captivity in Babylon was brought on by God.

Verses 21-23: "Ahab ... Zedekiah": Two captive, false Israelite prophets, who had been misleading exiles in Babylon (verse 15), will stir up the wrath of their captor king, who will cast them into a furnace (as in Dan. Chapter 3). They aroused not only the Babylonian potentate's hatred, but God's also, because of prophecies against His word and physical adultery (compare 5:7).

**Jeremiah 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;"**

(See Jeremiah 29:4).

"Of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you": Two false prophets, of whom we have no account anywhere else but here. And are, no doubt, the prophets, or however two of them, that they of the captivity boasted of that God had raised unto them in Babylon (Jer. 29:15). The Jews say, and so Jerom relates, that these are the two elders that attempted the chastity of Susannah.

"Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon": They should be suffered to commit some crime against the state, of which notice should be given, and they should be seized as seditious persons. Which was so permitted in providence, that they might be brought to punishment for other sins they were guilty of.

"And he shall slay them before your eyes": By roasting them with fire: as follows.

It appears from this that Ahab and Zedekiah were false prophets. They had become prophets of their own volition, and not because God had called them. They spoke as if God had sent them. Their message was a lie. Strangely enough Nebuchadnezzar will slay them.

**Jeremiah 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;"**

A form of cursing. When they cursed anyone, or wished him ill, it should be in such like manner as follows. So odious and detestable would these men be afterwards to them, whom they, at least some of them, took to be the prophets of the Lord.

"Saying, the Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire": Or "burnt them"; not at once, but with a slow fire. "Burning persons with fire, and casting them into a fiery furnace, were ways used by the Chaldeans in putting persons to death (Dan. 3:6). And roasting men at a fire was used by the Chinese.

These false prophets were put into a fiery furnace and burned to death. The people started calling this a curse. The punishment for extremely sinful acts during this time was death by fire. We will read in the book of Daniel how the Babylonians put Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a fiery

furnace. The difference is they belonged to God, and God did not let the fire burn them. The false prophets did not have God's help and they burned.

**Jeremiah 29:23 "Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' 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."**

The reason here given must not be understood as the reason of the king of Babylon's punishment of them. But why God gave them up into his hands, because they had committed villainy or folly in Israel. Which is expounded by the next words.

"And have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives": All sin is folly, and so called in Scripture, uncleanness particularly (Gen. 34:7). Here it is called villainy, to denote the heinousness of it. Especially in those whose office it was to teach others that they ought not to do it (Rom. 2:22). Falsehood in discharge of a trust is ordinarily attended with debauchery of life, nor indeed can it be reasonably imagined that those who, to humor men, have debauched their consciences. And declared things as the will of God, which they know are not so, should be more true and honest in their conversation towards men. The second crime of these false prophets was, what gave them their denomination, teaching people what God had never bid them speak. Now this, saith the Lord,

"I know, and am a witness": Their adulteries are in secret, but I am a witness to them. The poor people do not know that they teach them lies, but I know it. God will deal with men not according to what men like themselves know of them, and can prove against them. But according to what he knows and can witness against them.

They called themselves prophets but they did not live the holy set-aside life required of a prophet. In fact, they committed physical and spiritual adultery. They were not only full of lies, but they lied and said God was speaking through them. God is the witness against them. The villany they committed in Israel was probably, sexual in nature.

Verses 24-32: The judgment against Shemaiah, the otherwise unknown prophet, who opposed Jeremiah, was similar to that experienced by Hananiah (compare 28:15-17).

**Jeremiah 29:24 "[Thus] shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,"**

Or, "the dreamer"; because he pretended to have dreams from the Lord. Or because what he delivered as prophecies were mere dreams. As that the captives should quickly return to their own land; so Kimchi. He was, another of the false prophets in Babylon. This latter part of the chapter is of a later date than the former; and refers to what was done after the above letter of Jeremiah came to the captives in Babylon. And after, the return of the messengers from thence, who brought, account how it was received. And what annoyance it gave to the false prophets.

"Saying" (as follows).

**Jeremiah 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,"**

(See Jeremiah 29:4).

"Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem": Not in the name of the captives, whom he consulted not. Nor with Ezekiel the prophet of the Lord, who was of the captivity. But in his own name, taking upon him to direct and order what should be done in Jerusalem. These letters were sent, very probably, by the hands of the king's messengers, when they returned, whose names are mentioned (Jer. 29:3). Some of them were sent to the people, to set them against the prophet of the Lord, Jeremiah, that they might not give any heed and credit to him. And others to the priests, as follows:

"And to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest": Not the High Priest, but his Sagan or deputy. The second priest, as he is called (Jer. 52:24); for Seraiah was High Priest, unless he was now become High Priest in his place. This Maaseiah was either his immediate parent, or else the head of that course to which Zephaniah belonged, as a common priest, which was the twenty fourth in order (1 Chron. 24:18).

"Saying" (as follows):

Jeremiah had sent a letter to those in Babylon, speaking directly of terrible things about to occur. It appears that Shemaiah, a false prophet, reacted by sending letters to Jerusalem and to the priests. The worst part of the letters was that he used the LORD's name in them, as if the LORD had him send them.

**Jeremiah 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."**

That is, High Priest, as some have thought. But it appears from (2 Kings 25:18), that Seraiah was at this time the High Priest. And this Zephaniah was the second priest, as he is there styled as also (Jer. 52:24). Nor must any think that the Jehoiada here meant was the immediate predecessor of Zephaniah, for besides that Jehoiada was High Priest. Which Zephaniah never was, there were near two hundred years between the death of Jehoiada and this time. In the stead therefore here signified, that thou should be like the good High Priest Jehoiada. Unless some other Jehoiada was meant, who was turned out, and this Zephaniah put in his stead.

"That ye should be officers in the house of the Lord, for every man that is mad": That thou might have a care of religion, and particularly take care of persons who being mad or troubled make themselves prophets. The priests had a power to restrain such persons by imprisoning them, or putting them in the stocks, by which most agree a particular punishment is expressed, but for the nature and way of it is not determined.

This was an attempt to have Jeremiah locked up as a mad man. Shemaiah thought if he flattered the priest, he would do as he asked. He says "You have the authority, just lock Jeremiah up".

**Jeremiah 29:27 "Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?"**

Not by words only, but by actions. By beating and scourging, by pillory or imprisonment, and so restraining him from prophesying to the people.

"Which maketh himself a prophet unto you?" takes upon him such an office, though not sent of the Lord, as he would insinuate. This shows the haughtiness and insolence of the false prophets in Babylon. To assume such authority to themselves, to dictate to the High Priest, as Kimchi takes him to be, or however the second priest. What he should do, and to rebuke him for not doing his office.

This is spoken to the priest that took the place of Jehoiada. He is accusing Jeremiah of being a self-appointed prophet.

**Jeremiah 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."**

That is, Jeremiah the prophet. And this was the reason, because his mouth was not stopped, and he restrained from prophesying. So that Shemaiah lays all the blame on Zephaniah, and his brethren the priests. Who, had they done their duty, would have prevented Jeremiah's letter to the captives, as he suggests. The purport of which was,

"This captivity is long": So Kimchi, Abarbinel, and Ben Melech, supply it; or, "it is long". It will be a long time before the captives shall return to their own land. And therefore, they should not think of it, or provide for it. But, on the contrary, for their continuance in Babylon. Giving the following advice:

"Build ye houses, and dwell in them": And plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; referring to Jeremiah's letter (see Jer. 29:5).

He accused Jeremiah of something God had put in Jeremiah's mouth. The accusation was truth, Jeremiah did say these things, or God did.

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

Of Shemaiah's to him, and the other priests.

"In the ears of Jeremiah the prophet": Whether out of good will, to let him know who his enemies abroad were. Or out of ill will, to stir up the people against him. Or in pretense of proceeding equitably with him. Not taking him up, and punishing him before he brought the accusation and charge against him. And acquainted him who were his accusers, and what

evidence there was. And heard what he had to say in his own defense, whether one or the other is uncertain. However, by this means Jeremiah came to the knowledge of Shemaiah's letter.

Instead of Zephaniah locking Jeremiah up as a mad man, he read him the letter.

**Jeremiah 29:30 "Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,"**

After he had heard the letter read.

"Saying" (as follows).

God quickly replies to these false accusations against Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 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:"**

Another letter; not to Shemaiah, but to the people, that they might all know that he was a false prophet. And how his lies were resented by the Lord. And what punishment should be inflicted on him and his, on account of them.

"Saying, thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite": The letter, though written by the prophet, must be sent in the name of the Lord, declaring what he would do with the person mentioned, and the reason of it. Which follows:

"Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie": That they should in a very little time return from their captivity to Jerusalem.

**Jeremiah 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."**

Because he prophesied without being sent of God, and prophesied lies, by which the people were deceived.

"Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed": Not him only, but his posterity also. Thus, God sometimes visits the sins of parents on their children, they being, as it were, a part of themselves, and oftentimes partners with them in their iniquities.

"He shall not have a man to dwell among this people": Either at Babylon, or at Jerusalem, whither he had promised a speedy return.

"Neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord": By returning them, after seventy years captivity, to their own land, and to the enjoyment of all their privileges, civil and religious.

"Because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord": Or, "a departure from him". Taught men to revolt from him, and not give heed to his prophets. To disbelieve what he said by them, concerning their continuance in Babylon. Which is called a rebellion against him. And being so heinous a crime, deserved the punishment denounced on him and his. Rebels and their offspring are punished among men.

Just about the worst thing that could happen to a Hebrew, was not to have sons to carry on the family name. Of course, this was not the only punishment spoken against Shemaiah. He would not live to see the return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. Shemaiah was disclosed as a false prophet (God did not send him). The reason for the punishment was that he taught rebellion.

### **Jeremiah Chapter 29 Questions**

1. How did Jeremiah get his prophecy to Babylon?
2. Who did he send it to?
3. What does the word "residue" tell us?
4. Name some that were carried into captivity in verse 2.
5. Who were the two men who actually carried them captive to Babylon?
6. Who really caused them to be taken captive?
7. What did Jeremiah tell them to do in verse 5?
8. Why was it so important for them to marry and have a family?
9. Why should they pray for the peace of Babylon?
10. Let not your \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ deceive you.
11. The false prophets pretended they were of God by saying what?
12. After \_\_\_ years, God will visit them and cause them to return?
13. What thoughts did God have toward them?
14. What does the mention of God having thoughts show us about Him?
15. What wonderful promise does God give them in verse 12?
16. What is verse 14 speaking of?



17. The covenant of Abraham is still theirs, if they \_\_\_\_\_ God.
18. Because they listened to false prophets, what will happen to them?
19. They had ears to hear, but did not \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Name two of the false prophets.
21. What happened to both of them?
22. What were some of their sins, besides prophesying falsely?
23. Who sent letters that were against Jeremiah?
24. What did he want them to do to Jeremiah?
25. What was he accusing Jeremiah of?
26. What reaction did Zephaniah have to the letter?
27. What happens to Shemaiah?