
JEREMIAH 29: 1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon,

This chapter contains the substance of two letters sent by the prophet to the captives in Babylon. In the first he recommends to them patience and composure under their present circumstances, which were to endure for seventy years, Jer 29:1-14; in which, however, they should fare better than their brethren who remained behind, Jer 29:15-19. But, finding little credit given to this message, on account of the suggestions of the false prophets, Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, who flattered them with the hopes of a speedy end to their captivity, he sends a second, in which he denounces heavy judgments against those false prophets that deceived them, Jer 29:20-23; as he did afterwards against Shemaiah the Nehelamite, who had sent a letter of complaint against Jeremiah, in consequence of his message, Jer 29:24-32.

Verse 1

Now these are the words of the letter - This transaction took place in the first or second year of Zedekiah. It appears that the prophet had been informed that the Jews who had already been carried into captivity had, through the instigations of false prophets, been led to believe that they were to be brought out of their captivity speedily. Jeremiah, fearing that this delusion might induce them to take some hasty steps, ill comporting with their present state, wrote a letter to them, which he entrusted to an embassy which Zedekiah had sent on some political concerns to Nebuchadnezzar. The letter was directed to the elders, priests, prophets, and people who had been carried away captives to Babylon.

JEREMIAH 29: 2 (after that Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths, had departed from Jerusalem),

JEREMIAH 29: 3 by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), saying,

JEREMIAH 29: 4 Thus says the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, to all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Verse 4

Thus saith the Lord of hosts - This was the commencement of the letter.

JEREMIAH 29: 5 Build houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat their fruit.

Verse 5

Build ye houses - Prepare for a long continuance in your present captivity. Provide yourselves with the necessaries of life, and multiply in the land, that ye may become a powerful people.

JEREMIAH 29: 6 Take wives, and father sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there, and don't be diminished.

JEREMIAH 29: 7 Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you shall have peace.

Verse 7

Seek the peace of the city - Endeavor to promote, as far as you can, the prosperity of the places in which ye sojourn. Let no disaffection appear in word or act. Nothing can be more reasonable than this. Wherever a man lives and has his nourishment and support, that is his country as long as he resides in it. If things go well with that country, his interest is promoted by the general prosperity, he lives at comparative ease, and has the necessaries of life cheaper; and unless he is in a state of cruel servitude, which does not appear to have been the case with those Israelites to whom the prophet writes, (those of the first captivity), they must be nearly, if not altogether, in as good a state as if they had been in the country that gave them birth. And in this case they were much better off than their brethren now in Judea, who had to contend with famine and war, and scarcely any thing before them but God's curse and extermination.

JEREMIAH 29: 8 For thus says the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel: Don't let your prophets who are in your midst, and your diviners, deceive you; neither listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed.

Verse 8

Neither hearken to your dreams - Rather, dreamers; for it appears there was a class of such persons, who not only had acquired a facility of dreaming themselves, but who undertook to interpret the dreams of others.

JEREMIAH 29: 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in my name: I have not sent them, says the LORD.

JEREMIAH 29: 10 For thus says the LORD, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Verse 10

For thus saith the Lord - It has been supposed that a very serious transposition of verses has taken place here; and it has been proposed to read after Jer 29:9 the sixteenth to the nineteenth inclusive;

then the tenth, and on to the fourteenth inclusive; then the twentieth, the fifteenth, the twenty-first, and the rest regularly to the end.

That after seventy years be accomplished - לפי מלאַת lephi meloth, "at the mouth of the accomplishment," or "fill to the mouth." Seventy years is the measure which must be filled; - fill this to the brim; - complete this measure, and then you shall be visited and released. The whole seventy must be completed; expect no enlargement before that time.

JEREMIAH 29: 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope and a future.

Verse 11

Thoughts of peace - Here God gives them to understand,

1. That his love was moved towards them.
 2. That he would perform his good word, his promises often repeated, to them.
 3. That for the fulfillment of these they must pray, seek, and search.
 4. That he would hearken, and they should find him; provided,
 5. They sought him with their whole heart, Jer 29:10-13.
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JEREMIAH 29: 12 You shall call on me, and you shall go and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

JEREMIAH 29: 13 You shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.

JEREMIAH 29: 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD; and I will bring you again to the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive.

Verse 14

I will gather you from all the nations - A quotation from Deu 30:3, and see also Deu 4:7.

JEREMIAH 29: 15 Because you have said, the LORD has raised us up prophets in Babylon;

Verse 15

Because ye have said - The Septuagint very properly insert this verse between the twentieth and the twenty-first, and thus the connection here is not disturbed, and the connection below completed.

JEREMIAH 29: 16 thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who haven't gone with you into captivity;

JEREMIAH 29: 17 thus says the LORD of Armies; Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that can't be eaten, they are so bad.

Verse 17

Behold, I will send upon them the sword - Do not envy the state of Zedekiah who sits on the throne of David, nor that of the people who are now in the land whence ye have been carried captive, (Jer 29:16), for "I will send the sword, the pestilence, and the famine upon them;" and afterwards shall cause them to be carried into a miserable captivity in all nations, (Jer 29:18); but ye see the worst of your own case, and you have God's promise of enlargement when the proper time is come. The reader will not forget that the prophet is addressing the captives in Babylon.

JEREMIAH 29: 18 I will pursue after them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an object of horror, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations where I have driven them;

JEREMIAH 29: 19 because they have not listened to my words, says the LORD, with which I sent to them my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but you would not hear, says the LORD.

JEREMIAH 29: 20 Hear therefore the LORD's word, all you of the captivity, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Verse 20

Hear ye therefore the word - Dr. Blayney thinks there were two letters written by the prophet to the captives in Babylon, and that the first ends with this verse. That having heard, on the return of the embassy (Elasah and Gemariah, whom Zedekiah had sent to Babylon, and to whom the prophet entrusted the above letter, Jer 29:3), that the captives had not received his advises favourably, because they were deceived by false prophets among them, who promised them a speedier deliverance, he therefore wrote a second letter, beginning with the fifteenth verse, and going on with the twenty-first, etc., in which he denounces God's judgments on three of the chief of those, Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah.

JEREMIAH 29: 21 Thus says the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall kill them before your eyes;

Verse 21

He shall slay them before your eyes - Nebuchadnezzar would be led by political reasons to punish these pretended prophets, as their predictions tended to make his Israelitish subjects uneasy and disaffected, and might excite them to rebellion. He therefore slew them; two of them, it appears, he burnt alive, viz., Ahab and Zedekiah, who are supposed by the rabbins to be the two elders who endeavored to seduce Susanna, see Jer 29:23. Burning alive was a Chaldean punishment, Dan 3:6, and Amo 2:1. From them other nations borrowed it.

JEREMIAH 29: 22 and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captives of Judah who are in Babylon, saying, the LORD make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

JEREMIAH 29: 23 because they have worked folly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in my name falsely, which I didn't command them; and I am he who knows, and am witness, says the LORD.

Verse 23

Have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives - This is supposed to refer to the case of Susanna. See above.

JEREMIAH 29: 24 Concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite you shall speak, saying,

Verse 24

Speak to Shemaiah - Zephaniah was the second priest, sagan, or chief priest's deputy, and Seraiah, high priest, when Jerusalem was taken. See Jer 52:24. Shemaiah directs his letter to the former, and tells him that God had appointed him to supply the place of the high priest, who was probably then absent. His name was either Azariah or Seraiah his son, but called Jehoiada from the remarkable zeal and courage of that pontiff. See the passages in the margin. - Dodd. After the taking of Jerusalem, Zephaniah was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, see Jer 37:3. The history of Jehoiada may be seen 2Kgs 11:3, etc.

JEREMIAH 29: 25 Thus speaks the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, saying, Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

JEREMIAH 29: 26 The LORD has made you priest in the place of Jehoiada the priest, that there may be officers in the LORD's house, for every man who is mad, and makes himself a prophet, that you should put him in the stocks and in shackles.

Verse 26

For every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet - Mad, מְשֻׁגָּג meshugga, in ecstatic rapture; such as appeared in the prophets, whether true or false, when under the influence, the one of God, the other of a demon. See 2Kgs 9:11; Hos 9:7.

JEREMIAH 29: 27 Now therefore, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who makes himself a prophet to you,

JEREMIAH 29: 28 because he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, The captivity is long: build houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat their fruit?

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

JEREMIAH 29: 30 Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah, saying,

JEREMIAH 29: 31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, and I didn't send him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie;

JEREMIAH 29: 32 therefore thus says 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 see the good that I will do to my people, says the LORD, because he has spoken rebellion against the LORD.

Verse 32

I will punish Shemaiah -

1. He shall have no posterity to succeed him.
2. His family, i.e., relations, etc., shall not be found among those whom I shall bring back from captivity.
3. Nor shall he himself see the good that I shall do for my people.

And all this shall come upon him and his because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord. He excited the people to reject Jeremiah, and to receive the lying words of the false prophets; and these led them to rebel.