

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 313 – Words Of The Letter Through Punishing Shemaiah (Jeremiah 29:1-32)

1. To whom did Jeremiah write a letter and how was it sent?

“(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; (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;) (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” (Jeremiah 29:1-3).

- Writing is sometimes a necessary form of teaching. We can see this in how the Scriptures are all written and profitable as such (**Romans 15:4**).
- Letters are a form of acceptable teaching (**Galatians 6:11** and **Hebrews 13:22**; i.e. the epistles of the N.T.).
- Everyone, still alive, regardless of status, had been taken captive (**Jeremiah 52:27**).
- We will read later of Gemariah as he will stand and try to get the king not to burn the word of God (**Jeremiah 36:25**).

2. Did Jeremiah's letter, through inspiration of the Almighty, tell the people to be miserable in Babylonian captivity?

No: *“(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; (5) Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; (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. (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” (Jeremiah 29:4-7).*

- “Thus saith the Lord...” is a phrase used over 400 times in Old Testament from **Exodus 4:22 – Malachi 1:4**
- God is plain and clear to state that He was the source of their being carried away captive (**Jeremiah 24:1-10**).
- God does not leave His doing in matters to be an unsolved mystery (**Genesis 9:11-17, Joshua 24:31, Isaiah 41:14-29, Isaiah 42:8, Isaiah 45:1-12, Isaiah 48:11, Ezekiel 12:16, John 18:20, and Acts 14:17**).
- They could dwell in captivity peaceably (**Jeremiah 21:8-10**).
- God needed them to procreate (**Genesis 22:18**), thus He allowed such, since Jesus was to come from Judah (**Hebrews 7:14**) and this generation would pass since captivity was to be 70 years (**Jeremiah 25:9-11**).

- God wanted them, even in captivity, to look to Him for their source of peace (**Psalms 29:11, Proverbs 16:7, and Isaiah 45:7**).

3. What warning about the prophets was made to the people in captivity?

Not to believe their deceptions: *“(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. (9) For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:8-9).*

- Don't be deceived (**Proverbs 19:27, Jeremiah 23:14, Ephesians 5:6, I Timothy 1:3-7, and I John 4:1**).
- You'll not be excused for being led astray by a false doctrine/teacher (**Isaiah 9:16, Ezekiel 13:9-16, Matthew 15:14, and II John 1:6-11**).
- Don't follow false dreams that you have caused to occur (**Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Jeremiah 23:32**).
- God didn't send these false prophets (**Jeremiah 27:15**).

4. Did God leave any hope for the future of Israel in this letter from Jeremiah?

A bright future beginning in 70 years: *“(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. (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. (12) Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. (13) And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (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” (Jeremiah 29:10-14).*

- See: **II Chronicles 36:21-23, Ezra 1:1-11, Isaiah 55:6-9, Jeremiah 27:22, Daniel 9:3-27, and Amos 9:8-15.**

5. What happened when Israel chose not to hearken to the word of the Lord that was delivered by His servants the prophets?

No: *“(15) Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; (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; (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. (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: (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. (20) Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: (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; (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; (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" (Jeremiah 29:15-23).

- God spoke in these times to the people by the prophets (**Numbers 12:6** and **Hebrews 1:1-2**).
- Those who did not go forth into captivity, with the rest of the people, died miserable deaths (**Jeremiah 38:1-3**). Remember, willfully going into captivity could have saved their lives (**Jeremiah 38:17**).
- The result of disobedience to God is/was/always will be; severe consequences (**Joshua 1:18**, **I Samuel 12:15**, **Isaiah 1:18-20**, **Isaiah 3:11**, **Galatians 6:7-9**, and **Hebrews 12:22-29**).
- You have to listen to the faithful messenger (**II Chronicles 34:14-16**, **Matthew 10:11-15**, **Matthew 10:40-42**, **Luke 10:16**, and **John 13:20**).
- Those that lied to the people, they would be punished (**Jeremiah 14:14-15** and **II Peter 2:1-3**).
- The people wanted and received false doctrines (**Isaiah 30:9-11** and **Jeremiah 9:6**).
- Sin [villainy – foolishness; wickedness], even to widespread adultery, had overtaken God's people (**Jeremiah 23:10-11**).

6. What message was to be delivered to Shemaiah the Nehelamite?

God was going to punish him and his seed for the lies he gave to the people: *"(24) Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, (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, (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. (27) Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? (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. (29) And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. (30) Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, (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: (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” (Jeremiah 29:24-32).

- Shemaiah the Nehelamite worked against faithful Jeremiah and spoke lies in the name of the Lord. As we have addressed many times, this does not go unpunished (**Deuteronomy 13:1-5**, **Deuteronomy 18:20**, and **Ezekiel 12:21-28**).
- Once again, let's remind ourselves that at this time being a false prophet was easy because such is what the people wanted (**Jeremiah 5:31**).
- False prophets were such a cause of error amongst God's people that the Lord spoke of delivering the people from them (**Ezekiel 13:17-23**).
- To this very day, those who speak falsehood are not to be overlooked (**Romans 16:17-18** and **Ephesians 5:6-11**).